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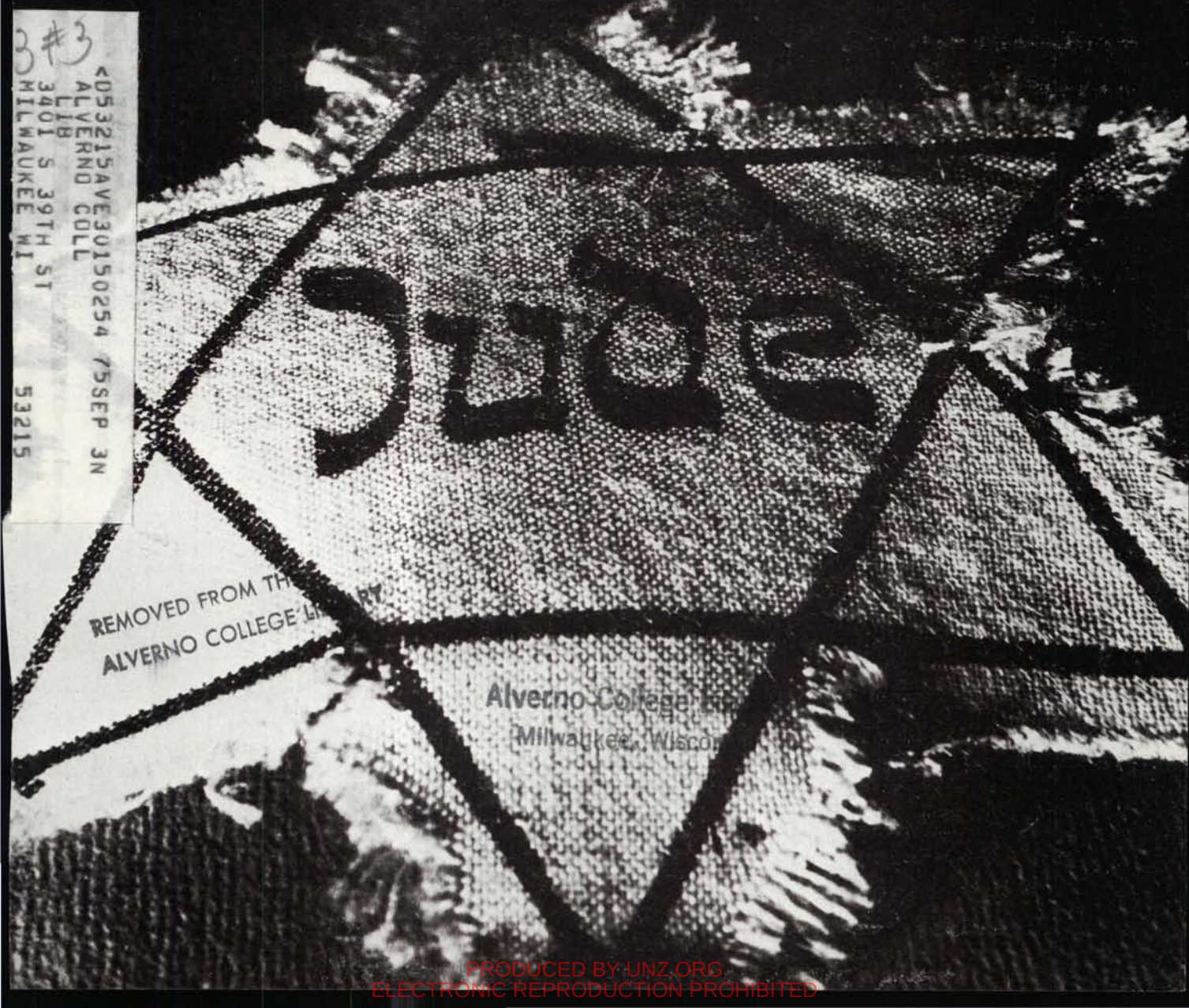

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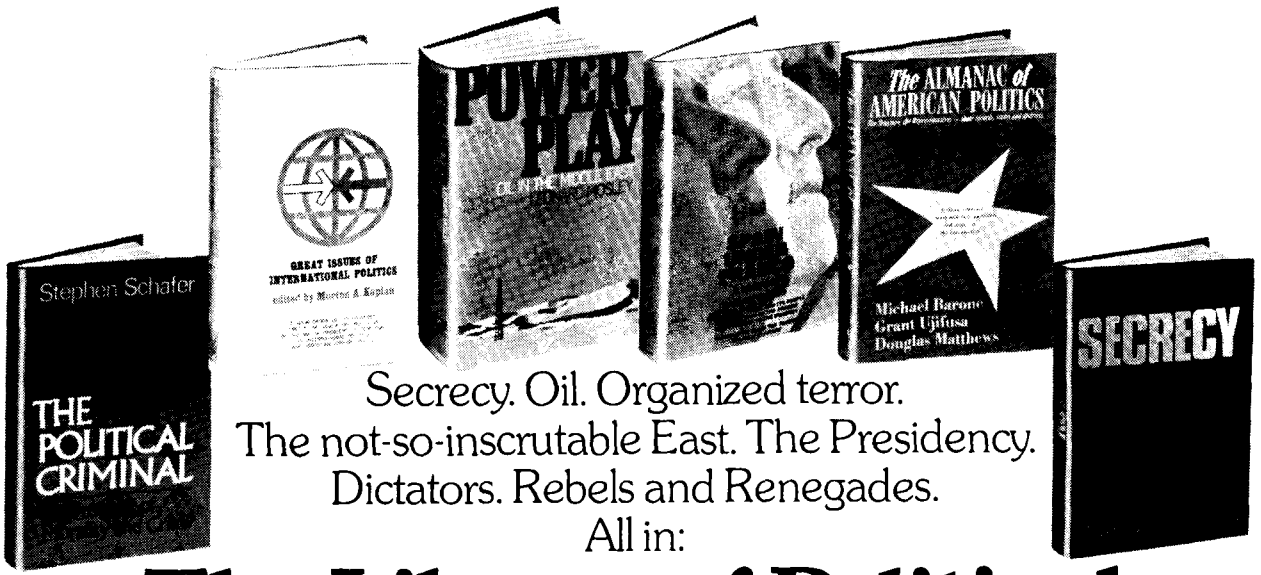

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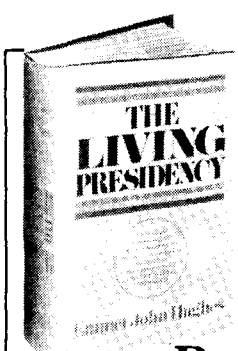

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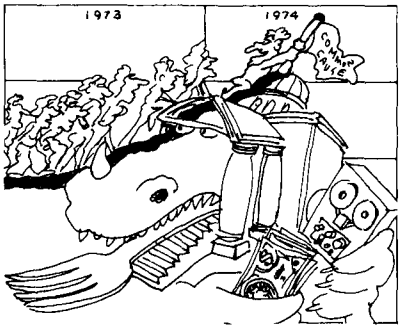

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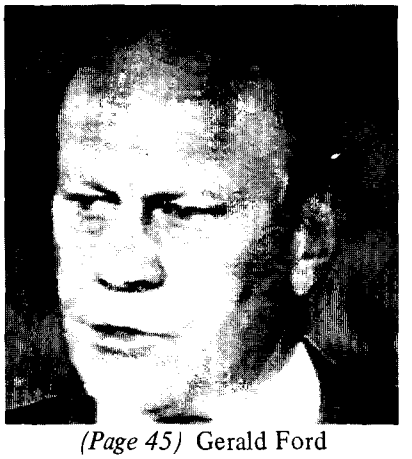

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Ramparts

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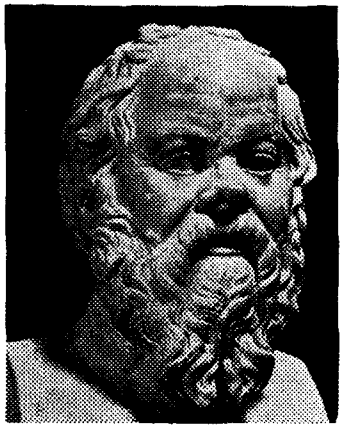

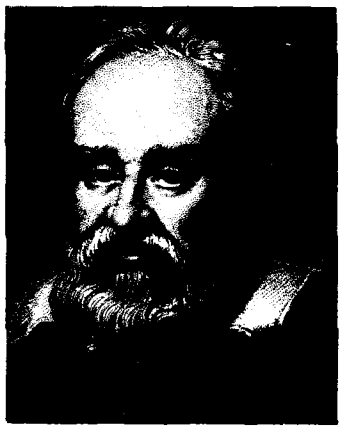

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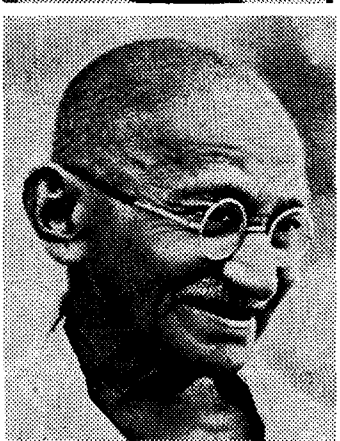

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Letters

[TURNED ON AGAIN]

Editors:

Ramparts turned me on in 1964 in the late Catholic period with excellent muckraking analysis of real problems from "radical" viewpoints. A lot of things and people grew with *Ramparts* in those years and I was one of them. Somewhere along the late 1960's, a bit of "Infantile Disorder" and a whole load of hard core ideology slipped in. We could handle the "lefter-than-thou" attitudes and even "the revolution is always right," but analysis by prescribed theory bummed us out.

Lately I've started newsstanding *Ramparts* again and been impressed. July was brilliant. Give us more of that. Zeman, McCarthy and Melman, *et al.* provide a perfect example to the liberal rags: that muckraking is more than just exposing a criminal few out of the hypocritical many. Unmasking the hidden crime may not be half as important as exposing the constant legal (and hidden) frauds and excesses in our accepted or even cherished institutions. We need that! Survive,

Nancy & Bernie Hyde
Tallahassee, Florida

[TAKING THE INITIATIVE]

Editors:

Andrew Kopkind's review article "Doomsayers on the Left" (*Ramparts,* August 1974) portrays very well the confusion which exists over how the American Left should respond to the upcoming "environmental apocalypse," when some combination of thermal pollution, nuclear radiation and fallout, rapid population growth and worldwide squabbling for control of dwindling resources will "obliterate human civilization." The problem, as Heilbroner rightly suggests, is that almost none of us, as humans, cultures or individuals, is able to identify with needs beyond a generation into the future. Obviously, generations yet unborn and hardly imagined have no means of protecting their interests. This human inability to perceive human needs in decades hence prevents Heilbroner from summoning anything more substantial or programmatic than "a filmy vision of a society that might outlast heat, nuclear war and totalitarian repression." Kopkind is right to dismiss Heilbroner's vision as a "hippy-dippy," Charles Reichian fantasy.

What however does Kopkind offer for the 22nd century? He does mention a few issues around which radicals could organize. He suggests that "programs and politics could be developed around population dispersal, alternate power systems, shortage economics, land-use control, work reorganization." Rather airily, he says that "there are enough ideas around; what's lacking is the radical will." Fair enough; but he ought not to overlook the California initiative, discussed by Gene Marine in the same issue of *Ramparts,* which will in effect ban nuclear power generators. If Revolution is truly a question of survival rather than a utopian luxury, then here is a specific issue which those of us in California concerned about the long-range future of man can commit our energies. It is a democratic effort, contrary to the totalitarianism foreseen by Heilbroner. Its successful passage will help forestall the radioactive wasteland and nuclear proliferation which is so much a part of our nightmare visions of future life.

J. Dennis Huckabay
Berkeley, California

[A PLACEBO FOR THE POOR]

Editors:

I would like to extend my thanks to Eugene Meyer for his poignant article—"Purgatory on Wheels" (*Ramparts,* August 1974)—which described in-depth several of the difficulties of lower-income families living in mobile homes.

Having researched the mobile homes controversy as an aspect of the rural housing crisis, I would like to enlarge upon his comments and pose a question for your readers.

First of all, the 1970 Bureau of Census indicated that mobile-unit housing represented more than 3.2% of all occupied substandard housing in the country. Moreover, these 245,794 trailer homes constituted greater than 11.6% of the total amount of mobile housing in use.

Further examining the statistics from the viewpoint of Black and Spanish-speaking families in America, the need for greater investigation and regulation becomes clear. While Blacks occupy less than 2.5% of all trailer housing, their share of substandard units exceeds 37%. For Spanish-speaking families who comprise less than 1.9% of all mobile housing, the substandard unit proportion is 26%. Certainly, that more than 64% of all mobile homes distributed among these two minority groups is inadequate in plumbing and sufficient space, heightens the injustices within the industry and management of trailer housing.

It should not be surprising to anyone that the increase in mobile homes production coincides with the shrinkage of available, decent housing at prices under $20,000. I suspect that pending federal legislation to increase the available funding for mobile home purchases and insurance under *Title I of the 1974 Housing and Development* Act will not be effective in eliminating the possibility of widespread trailer usage as quick and cheap housing for the poor. The Administration's efforts to eliminate public housing might additionally induce legislators to undertake this notion as a placebo to administer rural housing needs.

Most low- and moderate-income families living under these circumstances would welcome the opportunity to reside in more permanent, stationary construction, if Congress would begin denting the inflationary production of higher-priced homes. Should not this be an issue of greater priority than the control of mobile homes industries or the regulation of residential parks?

Gloria Cousar
Housing Assistance Council
Washington, D.C.

[BRITAIN'S BEST]

Editors:

I found that one of the most striking things about William Shawcross's "Report from Saigon: An Economy Near Collapse" (*Ramparts,* July 1974) was the end-note telling us that he is a correspondent for the London *Sunday Times.*

To readers outside Britain this may suggest that our *Sunday Times* provides its readers with regular insights into the current realities of Indochina. Unfortunately this isn't the case, as may be inferred from the paper's editorial of January 28, 1973, which began:

"It serves no useful or realistic purpose to ask who has 'won' or 'lost' the war in Vietnam, nor whether the Americans have achieved a settlement with 'honour' or 'dishonour.' . . . But who can say, who will ever be able to say, what the effect would have been in the rest of the world as much as in Southeast Asia, if the U.S. had exerted no effort at all to help preserve the independence and freedom of South Vietnam?"

I would dearly love to see Shawcross's "Report from Saigon" in our *Sunday Times,* but I won't. And so many people here will remain ignorant of, or acquiescent in, the horror of continued British government support for the Thieu regime—while denying *any* recognition to the PRG. "Britain recognises the Government of the Republic of Vietnam as the only legal Government of South Vietnam," the Foreign Office told me in a letter last week.

Philip Braithwaite
Kings Heath
Birmingham, England

Correction: The photograph that appeared on page 43 of the September issue of *Ramparts* should have been attributed to Victoria Rouse.

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[Perspective]

Gerald Ford, Understudy for Defeat

"Watergate, like Vietnam, is part of a pattern, for both represent the arrogance of power in conditions of extremity. Both were in many senses 'more of the same,' but so much more that such practices could never be the same again."

In May of 1973, as the Senate Watergate committee was rolling forward in high gear, *Time* magazine looked about for solace. It appeared to find what it was seeking in the proposition that, while Watergate did seem to "sustain the ancient cliche of democratic life that politics is a dirty business ... Yet most professional politicians and a great many observers of American life are convinced that, despite all the depressing evidence, American politics is not endemically corrupt and that Watergate is not to be used for glib generalizations." Which was a bit like saying that tyranny was not widespread in Babylon because out of the entire empire there was only a single tyrant.

Now Nixon has departed amidst crocodile tears and sonorous predictions in Congress that everything has changed. And even among those of us who from the start pressed hardest for impeachment, there is a letdown and a question whether anything has really changed at all. At first glance it seemed as if the whole thing had only proved how invincible are our governing illusions. Even scandal becomes a vindication; even Watergate ends as an occasion for self-congratulation all around. In Ford's inaugural address the shame of Watergate is transmuted into pride: "My fellow Americans, our long national nightmare is over. Our constitution works, our great republic is a government of laws, not men. Here the people rule." *Time* echoed this assessment in its own postmortem: "The departure of Nixon was above all an extraordinary triumph of the American system."

In a mere 800 days after the crime, we succeeded in ousting the criminal from our highest office. A less triumphant system might not have even managed the first step of making the crime possible or the second of electing him in spite of it.

Even in the aftermath it is not an easy matter to assess the significant dimensions of those murky and amorphous phenomena familiarly addressed as Watergate. In some ways the immensity seems clear. A President has resigned under the certain threat of a successful process of impeachment. Four cabinet officers and 28 White House aides have been indicted. But now that the inconceivable has come to pass, there is a sense of anticlimax. Even the prospect of impeachment seemed not so awesome in the end. Watergate was obviously unprecedented: it was a first for the republic in innumerable ways. But such measures are more suited to define a place for it in the *Guinness Book of World Records* than in the course of history.

This sense of Watergate's ambiguous significance is not merely the result of letdown: it has been present from the beginning. In the spring of 1973, when the story started breaking very big, Nixon himself tried to put it in a diminishing perspective: "Both our parties have been guilty of such tactics. . . . The campaign excesses have occurred on all sides." Vice President Agnew concurred: "This is not the first time that governments have been linked to scandals from Teapot Dome on down." And public opinion polls tended to agree. A typical comment cited: "If we got rid of all the shady people in Washington, who'd be left to run the government?"

Time magazine noted in response to this irony that "In a strange way, Nixon and Agnew were thus close to agreeing with the line pushed hard by the far left, that it is the entire system, the Establishment and all its works, that is to blame for whatever is wrong in the U.S." What *Time* referred to as the far left was meanwhile not noticeably elated at having its hard-pushed line suddenly adopted by the White House and a popular majority. The bland, expansive cynicism seemed an irritating refusal to acknowledge the full enormity of the disclosures. On the other hand, no one wanted to see Watergate dismissed as a malignant aberration. Significantly, the ambivalence we feel here has come to form a mere extension of the normal pattern.

In many ways, what we are seeing is the same progression of responses which characterized the ten-year preoccupation with Vietnam, only now it has been telescoped into the months of Watergate. Partly, it reflects the paradox of radicalism operating in a political scene from which even serious liberalism had largely disappeared, forcing the New Left over the years to play out both parts of that classic opposition: first to arouse shock and outrage by forcing the reality of Vietnam into the forefront of national attention; then, with a slightly perverse con-

by David Kolodney

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descension, to point out that a naive and narrow indignation over the Indochina war failed to comprehend the larger pattern of counterrevolution of which it formed a part.

There were with regard to Vietnam, however, not just these two, but three stages, all of which have illuminating counterparts in Watergate. First, the liberal mainstream defended or ignored the war, while the Left focused opposition onto it. Then liberal "informed opinion" came around to opposition, but emphasized the unprecedented conduct, the betrayal of traditions, while radicals turned to emphasizing the continuity and pattern. Vietnam, we pointed out, was not an aberration, a series of blunders; it was a deliberate and consistent extension of the counterrevolutionary policies of America's post-war global empire. Earlier adventures–Guatemala, Lebanon, Iran–were cited. The case of the Dominican invasion could hardly have been more clear.

Of course all of this was true. And eventually the persistent enormity of the war became so unmistakable that, even to more moderate elements, the idea of continuity and pattern became persuasive. But ironically, that very enormity was at the same time making the earlier radical formulations increasingly implausible and incomplete.

The pattern had been to have the U.S. will obeyed with a minimum of inconvenience. Vietnam was an extension of that prerogative, an effort to protect it and expand upon it. On the other hand, as years went by and casualties and costs began to soar, as an opposition mounted that was to fell a President, it was obvious that Vietnam could no longer be reduced to a mere extension of the normal pattern. After all, the full expanse of our post-war empire had a history of little more than 25 years, and almost ten of those had been dominated by the war in Vietnam. The aggression was deliberately planned; the defeat was inadvertent. The planners had intended to impose their will with overwhelming force. But they did not count on being driven to an endless succession of extremities, nor on the insupportable costs incurred. They did not plan that their war of example should end up chastening ourselves, that it was Americans who would be saying "no more Vietnams."

Watergate is also part of a pattern. But like Vietnam, it represents the arrogance of power in conditions of extremity. It, too, is at the same time the logical extension and the clear degeneration of what preceded it. Before, the master criminals of power; now, the desperadoes.

Nobody suggests that an ongoing pattern of more Watergates could be sustained. Like Vietnam, it was in many senses "more of the same," but so much more of the same that such practices could never be the same again. Watergate's "historic" significance is not for the ways it was the first of its kind, but for the ways in which it had to be the last.

[ON HIS OWN]

Many proponents of impeachment were dismayed when Nixon's resignation speech evaded a confession of his guilt. He attributed his fall not to his crimes, but to the fact that he "no longer [had] a strong enough political base in the Congress to justify continuing" to cling to office. And indeed, though Nixon's criminality is not in doubt, it *was* politics that sealed his fate. On this point he was surely right. Were it otherwise the Watergate experience would boil down to nothing but the trivia of personality and happenstance.

On the simplest level, one can see the role of politics in the fact that if Agnew had remained Vice President, the evidence of Nixon's guilt at any given stage would not have been considered nearly as compelling. The political alternative in view would have strengthened Nixon's base, not least among the liberal wing of either party. He was hardly likely to be "cleared," but interest in the matter might have waned sufficiently for him to withhold the evidence long enough to wait it all out.

The defection of congressional Republicans was Nixon's *coup de grace.* No conclusion, however soundly drawn from evidence, would have been sufficient to impeach if it could be denounced as "partisan." The fatal determination, by necessity nonpartisan, has loosely been presumed nonpolitical as well. But in fact, it was here that the depth of Nixon's political collapse was most decisively confirmed. The House Republicans especially found the logic of impeachment difficult to follow until their dimming prospects for the November polls added the necessary premise to make the argument complete. Of course the Watergate grand jury had already found ample evidence to indict Nixon from material that was long available; while new evidence was added as each successive batch of tapes was pried loose from the White House. Yet, in any case, few people in the country still found it necessary to gauge each

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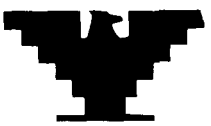

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"Nixon, like LBJ, would have preferred ruling by consensus to *diktat*. But where the credibility of office and the substance of support are no longer equal to the task, then secrecy, usurpation and defiance are the natural resort."

new disclosure independently, to find it more conclusive than the one that came before. Nor were the Representatives any longer looking to constituents to reinforce their suspicions of the President. Before the evidence was declared "nonpartisan," first by some and then by almost all of the House Republicans, their districts had deserted Nixon on the broadest of grounds.

That failure of political support is what broke the back of Nixon's Presidency. If Nixon had been able to maintain support of major constituencies which felt their interests to be vitally at stake in the preservation of his policies, if the landslide voters of the new majority had genuinely felt he carried a mandate that bound them to his fate, his criminality would very likely not have turned that tide of political support. The polls would not have been menacing enough for members of the House to insistently pursue impeachment, nor would the pursuit have been as successful as it was.

Time cites effects of the long Watergate preoccupation: "The leftover Nixon legislative program is a shambles. There is no energy policy. Attempts at a foreign trade bill, welfare reform and land-use legislation have bogged down." But this also worked the other way around. If the nation had widely depended on Nixon to deal effectively with popular concerns like these, if he had somehow "solved" the energy crisis or stemmed inflation or at least established a popular position on these issues, it might well have been the Watergate investigation that was thrust into the background.

Nixon made the political connection in these terms: "If I were basically a liberal by the press's standards, if I had bugged out on Vietnam, which they wanted, Watergate would have been a blip." What he leaves out of this by making the press the independent variable was that popular attitudes had moved away from his. On Vietnam, peace was certainly a mandate, as was the POWs' return, but where he insisted on "with honor" as a conflicting goal to peace, he was on his own.

[LAST RESORTS]

The fact that Nixon's politics were so far out of line with the public, the Congress, and the press, as well as with the narrowed options and margins of maneuver imposed upon him by the times, made his procedural conduct of the presidency harder to defend. But more significant, it was precisely the substantive divergences of policy that drove him to resort to practices tolerated from previous Presidents.

Bound up with Watergate are the uses of secrecy, deception, the usurpations of prerogative, defiance of the Congress, contempt for democratic forms, arrogation of ever vaster privilege, drawing on constitutional improvisation where the actual Constitution would not serve. A common element of the Watergate phenomena in institutional terms is the abusive expansion of presidential power. Nixon pushed the cold war presidency too far. He overreached its power, leaving it overextended, provocative, and indefensible.

This has been attributed to Nixon's isolated, defensive style. But when he did have a popular role to play, such as peacemaker to Peking, he was as public and expansive as could be. It is often less politically convenient to defend than to deceive. But when one's policy is rendered indefensible by the standards of the times, deception is no longer a convenience but a necessity. One may lie openly, or, if possible, by keeping silent; or if the question is still raised and pressed, one may rely on official secrecy. Nixon, like LBJ, would have preferred ruling by consensus to *diktat*. But where the credibility of office and the substance of support are no longer equal to the task, then secrecy, usurpation and defiance are the natural resort.

If Nixon could have ordered the bombing of Cambodia in public as LBJ did with the raids on North Vietnam, with a grave address rallying the nation to crisis and a near unanimous blank check from Congress to proceed, he would have done so. Of course Johnson already had recourse to deception in the Tonkin incident, in order to implement a policy that would not have played so well if recognized as unprovoked. But even that level of deception was not available to Nixon on Cambodia, because LBJ had used it up. The lie would not have been believed, and even if believed, no such adventuristic reflex could be counted on in a body politic already sobered by the costs of escalating war.

Whenever possible Nixon killed appropriations in the Congress. Popular ones such as those for housing and mass transit he would lay to rest *sub rosa* in committee, while officially affirming his support. The veto is uncomfortably public, but at least it follows constitutional norms. But as he turned more and more against the public tide, he started to rely on vetoes by the dozen, sustained by a minority, and even that most often only in the House. When he became unable to overcome political momentum with the veto power, committee labyrinths and filibusters on matters of compelling popular concern, then he was driven to rely heavily upon "impoundment"—a little-used and baseless practice whereby a President presumes to overrule the congressional spending power even if the veto has been used and overturned. It was a fitting symbol of Nixon's second term that his first major domestic move was to impound $3 billion in clean water funds—his

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veto had been overridden—water pollution being the top concern among his own supporters, according to surveys during the 1972 campaign.

The arrogation of budgetary discretion, by Nixon's fiat, to the Office of Management and Budget, a White House agency not accountable to Congress at all, was a further move towards making Congress a debating club. This fact was epitomized by the OMB's refusal, under executive privilege, to give Congress the raw data on the federal budget on the grounds that Congress was not competent to understand; and by Nixon's attempt to dismantle the Office of Economic Opportunity—by fiat once again for lack of the necessary votes. Eventually, it seems, Congress would have had little reason left to assemble, other than to give advice and wonder whether that advice would be accepted or ignored.

Of course the most extravagant Nixonian presumption was with regard to executive privilege, another invented doctrine used modestly before with some success by other Presidents. More than any other claim staked out by Nixon for presidential power, executive privilege formed the ground where the disparate strains of Watergate contention converged, and the fatal excess became unmistakable. The high water mark of presidential arrogance was reflected in a colloquy between then-Attorney General Richard Kleindienst and the Senate Judiciary Committee investigating ITT's antitrust consent decree and the Dita Beard memo.

When Senator Muskie asked incredulously, "Under your definition [of executive privilege] Congress has no power to command the production of the testimony of anyone in the executive branch in any circumstances?" Kleindienst replied "If the President so commands it." He went on to tell the Senators, "You've got all kinds of remedies.... [You can] cut off our funds, abolish most of what we can do or impeach the President."

The question of limits on presidential power came to the fore in this period after many years of ad hoc accommodations. The differences of policy were larger and Nixon was more determined that he would have his way, whereas before the President typically sought a political consensus or compromise. Nixon's logical extension of other Presidents' abuses was also the *reductio ad absurdum,* for it left Congress without leverage in any traditional transactions. As long as Congress as a whole had been content with the thrust of presidential policy, or was at least too much divided to react, a President could have his way with a minimum of challenge. Aside from status and patronage (which can just as well be won by legislators abdicating power to oblige the President) there has normally been little reason to think of Congress as a political unit set off against the executive, with members' loyalties involved with their branch of government as such, moving then jealously to guard their congressional prerogatives.

Congress as a whole could at any time have had its way if there had been a way it wanted very much to have, and if it had been willing to insist. Presidential assertiveness was premised on the absence of a concerted legislative will. The various claims to privilege invoked by Presidents are by and large flimsy and incoherent—so much so that even a sympathetic judiciary would find them unsustainable (courts are not guided by pure logic, but a minimum of logic is a precondition of their work). On war powers and Vietnam, the courts refused to stop the undeclared war, noting that if Congress wished to move another way it gave no sign of it. But when open conflict arose, with Congress specifically withholding funding authority so as to bar continued bombing in Cambodia, it was Congress that prevailed, and a court test of that was not in doubt.

Presidents have firmly established the power to fire officials unilaterally even though they are appointed with the consent of the Senate. That makes the President seem like the boss. But Congress creates the post and funds it and can do away with it as well. It can, should it choose, set the tenure to expire every month, and refuse to reconfirm it. It can nearly always make itself the boss if it has the reason and the will to bother. The conflict with Nixon arose, just as he observed, for political reasons rather than out of constitutional piety.

> "Ford offers to conciliate and compromise on issues where he would otherwise lose. But those who have espoused the opposition in Congress have an obligation to call his bluff rather than to cooperate. To fail in this responsibility is not a political compromise but a political betrayal."

[THE FATE OF GERALD FORD]

The politics which Gerald Ford now represents are almost line by line the same ones which led Nixon through the fatal sequence of arrogance, defiance and defeat. Just as much as Nixon, Ford is steeped in politics from which no program flows that can rally popular conviction, or adequately deal with the crises that we face, much less the far deeper ones impending. For him to take position on the center stage of open political debate would mean to take up Nixon's lines where he left off, and in effect to be a kind of understudy for defeat.

Of course Ford's hope is that he can charm America with his disarming affability, slack the social tensions and suspicion that have been giving political conflict such a cutting edge. If only the country would finally relax, at last get back to normal once again. Ever since JFK urged the voters to "get the country moving," that vain, nostalgic wish has accompanied each presidential accession. It is understandable that Ford should hold out hopes that the tension between Congress and his Ad-

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ministration should be subdued. Good vibes, open style, and happy memories. He must be well aware that when he has to come out fighting, he will very likely lose.

Simple prudence dictates a different kind of role for Ford. And of course he has made his vow to eschew the Nixon style into a kind of theme song of his presidential "honeymoon." His star has risen, but he promises not to forget his origins in Congress. There is a mawkish unreality to all the posturing about Ford's qualities of openness and candor, and his zest for compromise. The necessity for him to make a rapprochement with Congress is credited sentimentally to a regal magnanimity. He ostentatiously evokes the lessons of Watergate as if there were a choice available to him whereby they could be ignored.

The Ford honeymoon has been conducted just as if the office he assumed was the same cold war presidency that LBJ enjoyed or that Nixon started with. But just because of their excessive indulgences in power, the Ford humility is not a moral choice but a recognition of the new facts of presidential life as they have emerged from Watergate. The arsenal of presidential power available to Ford is much smaller than other Presidents in recent years have had at their disposal. It was above all Nixon who, by pushing limited and dubious authorities too far, used up their effectiveness, either completely or in part. Particularly fragile were the extraconstitutional prerogatives, such as executive privilege and impoundment. In general these had been invoked before with enough restraint and modesty that no decisive test of their validity or scope was ever forced. Often they were used to carry out policies that Congress—or a substantial base within it—would have accepted anyway, or was perhaps even happier to see enacted without having to bear responsibility for them. In any case, it was rare to find in Congress any concerted will that might have been systematically thwarted by presidential usurpation.

Because Nixon forced the question with his unprecedented use of impoundment, the issue is finally being ruled upon in the courts. And as could easily have been predicted, it is losing every time. No shred of constitutional basis for it exists, and the Supreme Court is now likely to declare the concept void. So Ford will not enjoy even the occasional indulgences that in the past were tolerated. He could attempt invoking it now, though it is hard to see how he could succeed.

Executive privilege was also forced into the courts by Nixon's excesses. Even though the Supreme Court left the broader issue ill-defined, it indicated limits far narrower than Presidents have gotten away with in the past.

On war powers there had been a certain congressional convenience in leaving to the President political responsibility for questionable adventures. With Vietnam itself Congress was for a long time content not to be asked to approve or reject the question of declaring war. But once again Nixon went too far and insisted on pursuing war not merely in the absence of congressional permission, but over positive congressional objection. So now Ford is constrained by the War Powers Act which Nixon had provoked.

Nixon's extensive reliance on impoundment to overrule the spending priorities of congressional appropriations also helped provoke for the first time comprehensive procedures for congressional budget overview. In the future, after the traditionally fragmented spending bills are passed, Congress will take upon itself the task of setting a total budget limit, and then bringing appropriations into line with that limit. It will be able to proceed in accordance with its own decisions about where budget cuts are appropriate. Budget powers, Ford will find, like war powers, have been drawn back into the Congress because of legislation which Nixon's excesses provoked.

The domestic security wiretaps that Nixon liked so much are now illegal. And Nixon did the nation a great service by crying wolf repeatedly over national security, which will be less effective if invoked and will no longer be accepted to mean whatever the President thinks it ought to mean.

It is generally considered effective to appeal to the awesome dignity of the presidency. Nixon did about as much as one occupant could do to blow that cover. It will be harder now by far for Presidents to win support on

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grounds of deference rather than of policy. For Ford to attempt to enter into the grave persona that has mantled recent Presidents must have seemed to him a futile effort. He has established a sympathetic image, folksy and unpretentious. That may well be the best that he can do at this point with the presidential imagery that remains intact. But while it may win friends, it won't influence people. It will not intimidate or hypnotize in what had been the customary style, fading in and out of the presidential seal to make the face into a montage of the state personified.

In present circumstances, reliance on the veto power would be a dangerous addiction, especially for an appointed President who hopes to win the next election. Nixon's vetos were becoming far from certain when returned to Congress; it was predicted that after the elections he would not have had even one-third of either house to back him up. It is not clear how much of the expected November sweep will now materialize.

Ford appears to be aware of the perils of the veto. In his inaugural address he said, "Tonight is no time to threaten you with vetos. But I do have that last recourse. . . . Can't we do the job better by reasonable compromise?" By and large it seems the answer to this question should be "No." A little reflection makes it clear that this was really *not* a threat, but a brazenly presented plea. It is hard to say for sure, especially before the November results are in, but the general impression that one gets is of a rather odd charade. Ford is pretending to be the President, in an office which largely has been destroyed. He is pretending that his meekness is restraint, but the powers are not really there to be restrained or exercised. He pretends to make a gift of compromise, when really he has no other choice except embarrassing defeat.

There were some early clues to this. He seemed to get away with it when he induced Congress to cut mass transit funds in half (from $20 billion to $11 billion), but it is not clear what this concession gained for proponents of the bill, except to save Ford the embarrassment of vetoing popular and vital legislation. He later tried the same approach in asking for the gutting of key provisions of the Freedom of Information Bill (see page 18). When they balked he agreed to sign it as it stood. On August 12 he told Congress that the budget must be cut to stem inflation and strongly indicated that cuts must not come from defense appropriations. Then, on August 21, an interesting pair of items came up in the news. In a meeting with the congressional Black Caucus Ford was playing the generous conciliator again. He had decided after all that the defense budget would not be immune from cuts. The same day in Congress $5 billion had been cut from the defense request and no Administration fight was mounted because to fight, they said, was hopeless.

[HOW TO SAY "NO"]

Ford offers to conciliate and compromise on issues where he otherwise would wholly lose. It is natural that he should move this way; he must play the cards he has. But when he is so clearly bluffing with an open hand, those who have espoused the opposition in Congress have an obligation to call his bluff rather than to cooperate. To fail in this responsibility is not a political compromise but a political betrayal.

It may come down to this. Nixon tried to rule by fiat and intimidation, and he not only failed, but aroused Congress to untypically responsible and active postures. Ford knows he doesn't have sufficient resources to prevail by fiat and probably not even enough to force a compromise. But for Congress compromise itself has always been seductive. Its members tend to crave evasion on almost any issue, to vote a safely middle ground on the pretext that it was necessary for compromise. They may find that attractive in itself. Nixon alerted Congress with his menace. Ford is offering an opportunity to them to return to their customary slumbers.

In his speech, Ford told the Congress: "If we want to restore confidence in ourselves as working politicians, the first thing we all have to do is learn how to say 'No' " on spending. But that in itself is far too easy. The tough decision is not to cut the deficit but how and where to do it. (How about less spending on defense and more revenue from tax reform?) Of course we must say "No." The question is to whom we say it: to the privileged or to the dispossessed; to the private car or to mass transit; to oil companies and to defense contractors or to social and environmental programs. There are choices to be made, and they are sharply pitted one against another. There are trade-offs everywhere by which some will win and therefore some must lose. When we say "Yes" to armaments we are also saying "No" to something else. President Eisenhower put it well in 1953:

> *Every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired, signifies, in the final sense, a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, those who are cold and are not clothed.*

There are choices to be made and those indicated by the politics of Gerald Ford are the ones that direct America to the mean and the destructive. Fortunately he inherited a presidency whose power to dictate against the public good is largely gone, destroyed in a lengthy political struggle that extended through Vietnam to Watergate. The victory was not just in Nixon's fall, but also in whatever weakness in the office now restrains Nixon's chosen successor. Ford lacks the power to dictate. He may well lack the power in many cases even to enforce a compromise. That is what America has won through the arduous struggle that was Watergate.

As President, Ford will make efforts to retrieve whatever powers he believes that he can get. If we are being asked to split the difference on fruits of the Watergate victory, that is not a compromise. If a thief attempts to steal just half of your earnings, that is not a compromise. If a diminished President attempts to steal back half of the oppressive privilege torn from his office in painful struggle, *that* is not a compromise. The cleavages of policy and interest that confront us are profound. The antagonists in crisis are going to be deadly serious. The era of good feeling is a lie and the honeymoon should never have begun. And it well may be, to paraphrase the President, that the first thing we all have to do is learn how to say "No" to Gerald Ford.

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Ramparts

TO OUR NEWSSTAND READERS:
We thought you might like to see this letter which we recently sent to Ramparts subscribers.

"For the moment, Berkeley is in order, if not at peace. Pickets have put away their placards, classes have been resumed, and so it will remain—if the regents behave sensibly. And in five or ten years, the demonstrators will talk nostalgically about the old days and think that the new undergraduates have no fire in their bellies."

—GILBERT HARRISON, writing in the *New Republic* in the aftermath of FSM, Berkeley's Free Speech Movement of 1964.

Dear Subscribers,

The ten-year mark is now almost upon us. Calling this old prophecy to mind conjures up a rather haunting question. Are the great, radicalizing movements of the Sixties truly ready for the nostalgia heap? There is certainly a pervasive notion that the radicalizing process which extended through that decade has had its day, that the promise of its growth has turned out empty, that it didn't have the staying power we had hoped.

It is the kind of question that has particular resonance for this magazine and the readers who have joined it. *Ramparts*, now in its twelfth year, is very much a product of that same political epoch. And one cannot deny the retrospective pride which participation in that history evokes. Great things were done, greater than we who did them knew. It is not hard to recognize that predicted feeling: Surely we had fire in our bellies then.

But in many ways a great explosion of political vitality does seem to be spent. A feeling of political exhaustion has been widespread and, along with it, the impulse to drop out of conflict with the evils of the system. There is the sense that the social tide has turned against us, the forces of opposition played out, the country has turned right, the people have been taken in, or have just returned to dead center, impatient of division and discord, and of dissenters forever tearing down America. Somehow or other, Richard Nixon's re-election established itself as a decisive omen of America's returning to a stodgy and secure repose, a turning back to normalcy, a signal that the unsettling shocks and challenges of the Sixties had at last been put behind us. There was the feeling that the system had been tested and had come through with renewed stability and public confidence.

[BACK TO NORMAL?]

Of course, the predictions of Nixon's "four more years" as an era of normalcy could not have been further from the mark. The vicuna coat and deep-freeze scandals of the Eisenhower years were hardly enough for us to be inured to Watergate. There were no impeachments in those years, not one attorney-general indicted. There was nothing to compare with our energy crisis, nor runaway inflation. The dream of normalcy involves a confidence in steady progress, not easily sustained when the almighty dollar is reduced to funny money, so that the real spendable earnings of the average worker today are lower than they were in 1965.

The political state of mind really prevailing in the United States was effectively obscured by Nixon's imposition of his own definition of the electoral mandate: military strength; self-reliance; a diminished government responsibility for social problems; toughing it out in southeast Asia. But the stresses of the second term have revealed with startling rapidity that Nixon's so-called New Majority was a concoction of the illusory and the ephemeral. The real shift in public attitudes began not with Watergate but with the emerging crisis brought on by the Vietnam War. On a comprehensive range of issues, there has been a sharply leftward shift cutting broadly across various social groups with the erosion of status quo support already dramatic at the time of Nixon's re-election. In that election year *Business Week* editorialized a remarkably apocalyptic warning:

> *The swift decline in the esteem in which the general public holds business is a sign of serious trouble ahead for corporate management. This disaffection shows up not only in a reluctance to buy some goods and services, but in a growing anti-business hostility. . . . If the trend continues, it could lead to painful changes in the free enterprise system.*

The occasion for this warning was the publication of a series of studies by the Opinion Research Corporation. "ORC's surveys," reported the magazine, "document the suspicion that there is a major political issue in complaints against the 'system'—and possibly against business itself. The important thing is the trend line, and some of these trends . . . started as far back as twenty years ago, with the major turn coming around 1965." So, for example, in 1965 persons expressing low approval of big business already outnumbered those expressing high approval by something more than two to one (45% to 19%). But by 1972 the margin of disfavor had grown to fully six to one (60% to 10%). And, *BW* found "even more worrisome, perhaps, the ranks of the traditionally strong supporters of business—Republicans, professionals, managers, college graduates, the affluent, the initiators (thought leaders and people most active in public affairs)." Even among these groups the base of business approval since 1965 had been cut in half.

A 1972 survey of the national mood by Potomac Associates, unrelated to the election, showed a clear reordering of popular priorities. Out of a list of 21 government-spending priorities, only two might even seem to fit in with the myth of New Majority reaction: combatting crime and coping with the drug problem. The rest of the top priorities, with a score of 80 or above do not: Helping the elderly, reducing water pollution, reducing air pollution, improving education of low-income children, improving medical and health care. And the Nixonian vision looks even worse off in the bottom five scorers which at best were fifty points below those mentioned: Spending for defense forces, main-

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taining US forces in Europe, spending for space, providing economic aid to foreign countries, and providing military aid to foreign countries.

What saved Nixon from his low ebb of first-term popularity was almost entirely his concessions on the cold war. When asked to name his top achievement, voters chose the trip to China (59%) and to Russia (54%). By comparison his position on welfare was only listed by 19%; law and order 17%; school bussing 17%; dealing with dissenters 5%. How then is this a period of conservative reaction?

[THEIR INSTITUTIONS AND OURS]

At a time in America when loyalty and commitment to institutions of any kind is rare, you have sustained this magazine, voting with your feet by standing by us when you could have walked away. In past letters such as this, we have written the obituaries of magazines like *Life, Look, Colliers* and the *Saturday Review;* now *Intellectual Digest* has joined them. Although our twelve years have never been especially financially secure, the list of magazines we have now outlived begins to make us look positively stable by comparison.

In the magazine business *Ramparts* readers are considered something of a phenomenon. Writing letters of this kind, and especially requesting early renewals as we do, is considered most unbusinesslike on our part, and even slightly mad. What the hard-headed, realistic business-types don't grasp is that *Ramparts* is not a business, and that is why it isn't mad for us to write like this. It is an act of faith, a faith that you have generously justified by your responses in the past. For you to renew early for future years is another act of faith, faith in what *Ramparts* is trying to do. It expresses another kind of faith as well, about yourself, that the political concern, moral sensibility, openness to change, even, one may say, the courage of your curiosity, will endure from year to year.

There is extremely serious and highly effective activism going on right now within this country, with implicit challenges that go to the heart of the status of privilege and wealth. The private prerogatives of business are being made public issues, and the divergence between the priorities of usefulness and profit is being driven home. There are initiative campaigns, consumer price boycotts, organized challenges to public agencies and the irresponsibility of private corporations. This is not a replay of the Sixties nor should it be.

In a way we have attained a higher political plateau, and we are starting at the bottom once again to scale another range of heights. But to start anew is not to start from scratch. Drawing thoughtfully on our experience, we can recognize the similarities in the movements now at hand, and appreciate the differences as well, learn from the past without living in it.

So ten years after the days of FSM we do not look back at the fire in our bellies with a bemused indulgence. We look back with pride. In the years ahead we hope to look back once again with pride in the perseverance of a maturing vision—in time perhaps a vision that redeems from the American experience its finest aspirations in the creation of a new reality. If we did not believe that *Ramparts* is a vital institution—now more than ever if we may put it so—the embarrassment of asking for your money would be too much. But we are convinced that *Ramparts is* vital, and its needs merit whatever help you can afford. If that means subscribing for more than one year—for three or four or twelve, or a sustaining lifetime sub—then we hope you will do that. It is not extravagant, but a rare thing in these times—money that is well spent.

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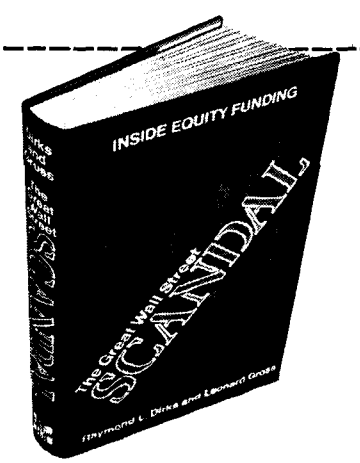

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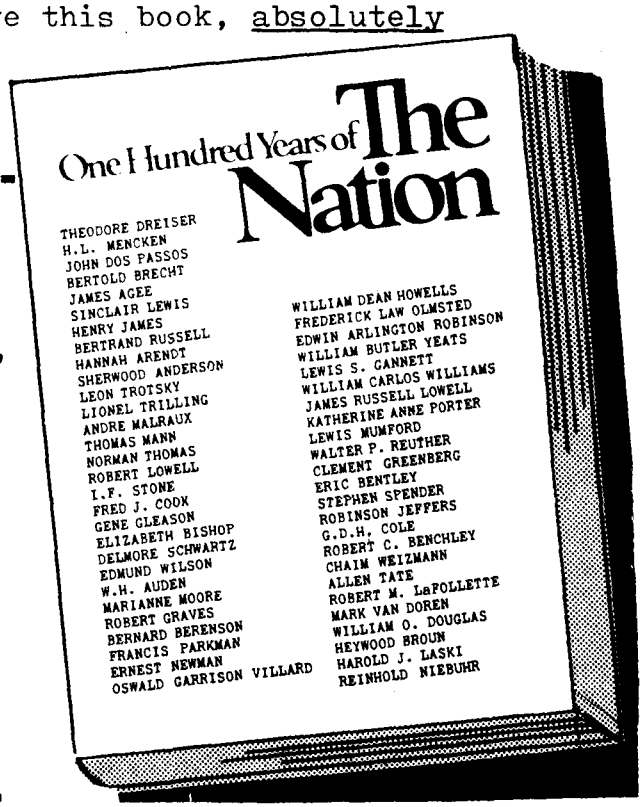

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What We Don't Know Can't Hurt Them

"In all my public and private acts as your President, I expect to follow my instincts of openness and candor with full confidence that honesty is always the best policy in the end."

—Gerald Ford
Inaugural Address: August 9, 1974

The rhetoric of candor has been spilling over the aisles of Congress for the last 18 months, and it seems there could be no better time than now for legislation to open up the government. Information is power when kept firmly in government hands: the erosion of Nixon's presidency, for example, followed step by step his loss of control over the evidence against him. But the power of information can be redistributed once people have the means of insisting upon their right to know. And those means will be significantly enhanced by a bill that should reach the President's desk early this fall.

Differing versions of the bill in question, which is aimed at strengthening and expanding the seven-year-old Freedom of Information Act, were passed by large, nonpartisan majorities in both houses of Congress. When Ford entered the White House, a Conference Committee was almost ready with a strong compromise version—one that would have been veto-proof with Nixon still in office. At first the new President tried to capitalize on his honeymoon with Congress, requesting a new compromise that would have gutted the bill. But after a few days of

§ 552. Public information; agency rules, opinions, orders, records, and proceedings.

(a) Each agency shall make available to the public information as follows:

(1) Each agency shall separately state and currently publish in the Federal Register for the guidance of the public—

(A) descriptions of its central and field organization and the established places at which, the employees (and in the case of a uniformed service, the members) from whom, and the methods whereby, the public may obtain information, make submittals or requests, or obtain decisions;

(B) statements of the general course and method by which its functions are channeled and determined, including the nature and requirements of all formal and informal procedures available;

(C) rules of procedure, descriptions of forms available or the places at which forms may be obtained, and instructions as to the scope and contents of all papers, reports, or examinations;

(D) substantive rules of general applicability adopted as authorized by law, and statements of general policy or interpretations of general applicability formulated and adopted by the agency; and

(E) each amendment, revision, or repeal of the foregoing.

by Richard Hall

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indecision, the Conference Committee turned him down on almost all points, other than one that would allow the FBI to keep more control over its files. Passage of the final version is expected to be the first order of business when the Congress reconvenes in mid-September, and Ford is not likely to veto it—not with his stand on "openness and candor."

Freedom of Information is a simple principle only recently made law—that information in the hands of public agencies belongs to the public, except in cases where the release of confidential material would cause demonstrable harm. The original Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) became law in 1966 and, although it had far too many loopholes, it was an important first step. People who knew about the law could get a wide variety of information from public agencies; and when those agencies refused to reply, a petitioner with access to legal skills had a chance to win an answer in court. For example, successful court actions forced the FBI to release its directives on the COINTELPRO campaign against the New Left; forced the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration to release correspondence with automobile manufacturers regarding defects; forced HEW to release survey reports on the qualifications of local health care facilities.

But a central flaw in the old FOIA was the wide range of broadly worded exceptions to public access—particularly, in regard to "classified" documents, inter-agency or intra-agency memoranda, and investigative files compiled by almost any government office, agency or bureau. The approach of the bureaucracy towards Freedom of Information was well expressed by an HEW document entitled *Records, Computers, and the Rights of Citizens:*

> *. . . the decision not to disclose is left entirely to the discretion of the agency holding the information. The agency is completely free to decide whether it will comply with a request that it disclose information falling within any of the seven [discretionary] exemptions.*

To be sure, the courts have urged that the agencies' *attitudes* toward FOIA requests be one of compliance whenever possible. Former Attorney General Ramsey Clark went so far as to direct all federal agencies to use their manpower and expertise to assist in processing and granting requests for information. And even under the Nixon Administration, some agencies have been surprisingly cooperative—particularly the Environmental Protection Agency and the Federal Energy Office. But those are exceptions. More typical are officials of the Agriculture Department (who refuse information so often that the Justice Department has become reluctant to represent them in court), the Internal Revenue Service (which testified against the proposed new FOIA) and the FBI.

It was a flaw that almost guaranteed lengthy and expensive court cases whenever government officials or bureaucrats chose to resist a request for information. In a court decision against the Department of Transportation, for example, the presiding judge wrote:

> *To this Court, the struggle over [the contested document] seems a monumental waste of effort by all concerned, apparently motivated by General Motors' "request" that the documents remain confidential. Yet the agency must know . . . [what] the law requires to be disclosed.*

That was, of course, the point. The FOIA has never had adequate safeguards against deliberate or capricious delays by government agencies. Although clear procedures were specifically written into the Act—such as requiring replies within 10 working days, and allowing for appeal decisions within 30 days—many agencies ignored these deadlines, as well as requests, knowing that few people have the resources to go to court. Those that do are likely to find that after months—or years—of litigation, the original question is often out of date. Not surprisingly, in its seven-year legislative history the Act has been invoked in court a little more than 200 times—a figure considered outrageously low by advocates of open government.

Furthermore, if a citizen did take the time and expense of going to court, there was no certainty that the courts would even be able to review any documents labelled "classified." This loophole was confirmed by the Supreme Court when Representative

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Patsy Mink of Hawaii sued the Environmental Protection Agency to release documents the EPA claimed were classified. The Court ruled that documents involved with national security were not necessarily subject to an in-court review to confirm that their classification was genuine.

It was this decision that convinced many people that the FOIA was far too weak in its present form. With more than 17,000 federal employees authorized to stamp documents as classified, too many agencies would get away with withholding information simply by placing it into a classified file and claiming the entire file exempt from the law. Exemptions for investigative files were treated similarly by the courts—often allowing non-exempt information to be withheld by putting it in the same files as legally exempt material.

During the last months of its battle with Richard Nixon, Congress turned toward Freedom of Information as one lever against executive secrecy and executive privilege. In introducing the Senate version of a revised FOIA, Edward Kennedy reflected the bill of particulars that was to be drawn up against the President by the House Judiciary Committee staff:

> *We have seen too much secrecy in the past few years, and the American people are tired of it. Secret bombings of Cambodia. Secret wheat deals. Secret campaign contributions. Secret domestic intelligence operations. Secret cost overruns. Secret anti-trust settlement negotiations. Secret White House spying operations. Clearly an open government is more likely to be a responsive and responsible government.*

The House and Senate bills were meant to "put teeth in the Freedom of Information Act" and to open it up to use by ordinary citizens. Of 16 proposed changes in the existing FOIA, four were especially important.

- The bill would reverse the *Mink* decision and allow judicial review of any contested classified documents, even those dealing with national security. If the documents were found to be incorrectly or arbitrarily classified, they would then be released to the plaintiff.
- The bill would impose sanctions on any federal official who did not comply with the law. No sanctions now exist.
- The government would pay the plaintiff's legal fees should the government lose its case in court.
- If exempt portions of requested information (such as investigative files) can be separated, then the requested information could be released with the exempt portions deleted.

Both the House and Senate approved these measures by large margins. The final vote in the Senate was 64-17; the Senate Judiciary Committee's recommendations on the bill had been unanimous. The only forces opposing the bill entirely or in part were those representing the military, such as John Stennis; those representing major industries, like Henry Jackson, "the senator from Boeing"; and those from conservative constituencies, like Roman Hruska of Nebraska. In the House, the vote on the parallel bill was an astounding 363-8. As the bill entered the House-Senate Conference Committee, nonpartisan feeling was high.

Gerald Ford's letter of August 20 to the Conference Committee virtually requested that the heart be torn out of the bill. His proposal would have upheld the *Mink* decision allowing broad exemptions for "classified" material; retained similar exemptions for investigative files; dropped sanctions against uncooperative bureaucrats; and relaxed deadlines on compliance. It was known that the Justice Department had been urging Ford to veto the bill—as Nixon would certainly have attempted. But apparently Ford was unwilling to say "no" publicly to open government, and instead hoped to put his name on a weak FOIA. It appears that he will be disappointed.

As it is written, the revised FOIA will make the federal bureaucracy accessible. Almost anyone will have access to government studies, agency directives, policy-making decisions, and *some* investigative material compiled by federal agencies—although the FBI will still be able to withhold some files, and the Pentagon and State Department will certainly retain their supply of "Secret" stamps. Agencies will have to provide indexes of their files unless it is "unnecessary and impracticable." The petitioner need only identify the requested documents within reason, and can only be charged minimal fees for actual searching or copying of records. Each agency must regularly report its handling of FOIA requests to Congress. These and other procedural changes, if backed up by the courts, could let loose a flood of previously withheld information.

The spirit of the new FOIA should also filter down to the states—each one of which has an Act of its own—and even to municipalities. The laws in Florida, Texas and Washington approximate the version now before Congress. And if the strict campaign-disclosure law approved overwhelmingly by California voters is any indication of public sentiment, more states are likely to follow.

Meanwhile, a great many researchers and activists are only waiting for the ink to dry on the new FOIA. ACLU attorney John Shattuck hopes to disgorge up to 80,000 FBI documents on the cases against Alger Hiss and Julius and Ethel Rosenberg. Historian Julius Epstein plans to renew his battle with the State Department over government documents on the Second World War. Political scientist James MacGregor Burns is expected to re-petition the State and Defense Departments for documents on the Cuban Missile Crisis. Ron Plesser of the Freedom of Information Clearinghouse wants to force disclosure of the internal operational and policy-making procedures of the Food and Drug Administration and the IRS.

The government is not about to nail open its doors, but neither can it bolt them shut. Secrets will still exist; the arrogance of officials and bureaucrats will always be with us. But Freedom of Information *is* the law. And if people learn to assume they have the right to ask questions, there will be a lot more answers to go around.

The Freedom of Information Act can be found in the U.S. Code, *Volume 5, Section 552—available in most public libraries. Pamphlets on the FOIA and how to use it are available from the American Civil Liberties Union in New York, and the Freedom of Information Clearinghouse in Wash., D.C.*

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The Passion of the Jews

by David Horowitz

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"There are catastrophes in the life of nations so vast as to disrupt permanently the balance of their social and psychological existence; there are wounds a people can endure which penetrate so deeply into their life structures that the inner being can never be healed. The Nazi Holocaust was such a catastrophe and such a wound for the Jews."

Do you have any Christian friends? The question was thrust at me quite unexpectedly, by a middle-aged Jewish doctor, during an informal evening's discussion about the Middle East. A man of forcefully liberal persuasions, the doctor had already revealed himself to be complexly aware of the moral and national issues involved in the conflict, despite a visceral commitment to the Israeli cause. In the course of the evening, he had also revealed that he had been a conscientious objector before Pearl Harbor (after which he enlisted without qualms) and to me it seemed that he retained a certain nostalgic warmth towards "youthful" radicals like myself. The setting—Berkeley's liberal hills—was also disarming, so that taken together, the combination of circumstance and speaker left me unprepared for the "moment of truth" (what else could one call it?) that followed. For when I responded affirmatively to his inquiry, that several close friends were indeed "Christian" (though they were no more religious than I), he paused dramatically and asked: *Would you trust them with your life?*

It was such a plummet into tribal depths that my reaction at first was to block the intent of the question itself. The very idea that in the year 1974, in middle-class America—in Berkeley yet—Jewishness might be considered an ultimate criterion of whom one could count as allies under assault (for that was the implication) cried out for dismissal as absurd, paranoid, and morally repellent. One was ashamed even to hear it. I thought for a moment of the Reform Jewish Temple to which the doctor and I belonged, and which I had joined when my children, growing up in integrated and ethnically conscious Berkeley, had shown the need for a cultural root. Its membership was drawn almost exclusively from the middle-class hill community, and in its majority would have regarded me as a barely tolerable heretic on the question of the State of Israel, as well as on many political and social issues likely to arise. In short, although their liberal commitments would provide some measure of support, it would be unwise of me to count on them as ultimate allies—Jewish or not—in conflicts which my own political commitments might entail.

But of course that was not what the liberal doctor meant at all. In the nightmare of his vision, the furies of destruction would come after me not as a radical, but as a Jew. That was the real danger for which one prepared. When *that* happened, I would know what it was to be alone among Jews. So, when I pushed the issue to its conclusion, replying *Yes, I would trust my life with my Christian friends* (for that is what one meant by friends), it was no surprise when he looked at me regretfully and said: *You are naive.*

It would have been no use for me, in attempting to refute this racial paranoia, to invoke the remoteness of such a prospect from even our immediate surroundings of material comfort, the influence of Jews in the local community, or the absence of overt anti-Semitism in the nation at large. For hadn't the German Jews—the inevitable reference point at such moments—been the most comfortably assimilated Jewish community in Europe before the War? The fact is that any paranoid fear of destruction that a Jew experiences in the contemporary world has its root in a reality that is both recent and unmistakable. Yet such fear has begun to grip wide sections of the Jewish community at a time when there is hardly a ripple of antagonism on the smooth surface of their assimilated existence in America. In a recent article on "Liberal Anti-Semitism" in New York's *Village Voice,* to cite one revealing instance among many, Ellen Willis—usually one of the coolest and most penetrating intellects of the New Left—complains about the inability of non-Jews to care about the survival of Israel and concludes: "Ultimately, I think, Jews are 'close-minded' because they sense that they are alone, that they can depend on no one. . . ."

[THE DEEPEST WOUND]

There are catastrophes in the life of nations so vast as to disrupt permanently the balance of their social and psychological existence; there are wounds a people can endure, which penetrate so deeply into their life structures, that though the surface may be repaired, the inner being can never be healed, in the sense of restored to its former self. The Nazi Holocaust was such a catastrophe and such a wound for the Jews. Through two thousand years of Christian persecutions and homeless exile, Jews became accustomed to suffering. In their trials, they managed not only to survive, but to survive *as a people* with a sense of mission born out of their suffering. Israel—the dispersed nation—was to be a "light unto the nations," its very exile and suffering the source of a continual revelation of the moral principles that the nations, in their power, had lost: "You shall not oppress a stranger," was their commandment; "you know the heart of a stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt."* A

* Exodus 23:9.

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nation of the alien and the oppressed, the Jews of the Diaspora (Greek for dispersion) possessed as their living heritage the sense of justice that is the immutable birthright of the victim, and the Law of God above the law of nations, which Moses, the great liberator, had received upon leading them out of their slavery in Egypt. "Hear, oh Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is One." One God, one humanity: the *Shema*, the credo of the Jews and the last words on the lips of Jewish martyrs throughout the centuries, implied the universal kinship of mankind.

But the Holocaust of the Second World War was a catastrophe of suffering beyond even the experience of Jewish history. All those centuries of persecution had not prepared them for the disaster that was to befall them. The gas chambers in which six million perished—the entire Diaspora community of East and Central Europe—were built by a malice whose dimensions were beyond their imagination. That they would be persecuted, and many killed, they did not doubt; that they would be systematically eradicated, as so much vermin, they did not consider possible. It denied the very hope that sustained them: that one day the divine voice would be heard by all; mankind and the nations would turn from their ways and bring on the messianic time when the lion would lie down with the lamb, all children and creatures of God—one family, one faith. Extermination foreclosed the hope of redemption.

Without a belief in the reality of the evil confronting them, the *inhumanity* which it portended, the Jews of Europe were slow to resist their destroyers. It was a fatal hesitation. Resistance might have saved many, but only a few resisted. As a result, in all the ghettos of Europe there are now only monuments of silence to the people whom God had chosen as His light.

Through the ashes the survivors came to realize, moreover, that it was not only the Nazis who willed this silence, but others less directly culpable. The Christian democracies of the West not only failed to come to the aid of the Jews in their agony, but afterwards closed their doors to the pitiful, tormented remnants whom the Nazis had not had time to kill. The timeless resort of Diaspora Jewry, to flee persecution in one country and to seek refuge in exile in another, was shut off: Jews were not wanted in America, while the fleet of liberal England blockaded the Palestinian refuge. And that nightmare experience of credulity, betrayal, and destruction has worked a profound change in the structure of Jewish psychology, in the dimensions of Jewish hope, and in the dynamics of Jewish survival.

["AN ACT OF DESPAIR"]

The most central expression of this change is the existence of the State of Israel, created as a Jewish state in 1948, and the most far-reaching result, what one writer has called the *Zionization* of the surviving Jewish communities. Before the war, the Jewish community was not only largely indifferent to Zionism, but actively hostile to it. For Zionism represented a sharp break with the tradition of the Covenant. Instead of a "light unto the nations," a people united across national boundaries, embodying in itself the unity of mankind, Zionism sought to solve the "Jewish question" by making Israel "like the nations," a state bounded by a defined national territory. For the universalist message of the Torah, it substituted a narrow, national identification.

The betrayal of Judaic teachings implied by Jewish nationalism was resisted from the beginning. In the year following the original Zionist congress, the Central Conference of American Rabbis declared that attempts to establish a Jewish state

> *show a misunderstanding of Israel's mission which from the narrow political and national field has been expanded to the promotion among the whole human race*

Arrest of German Jews

Main synagogue of Wiesbaden, 1938

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Above, refugee ship Exodus arrives in Haifa, 1947

Below, besieged settlement of French Jews, on the Jerusalem Road, 1948

of the broad and universalistic religions first proclaimed by the Jewish prophets. . . . We affirm that the object of Judaism is not political, nor national, but spiritual, and addresses itself to the continuous growth of peace, justice, and love in the human race, to a messianic time when all men will recognize that they form "one great brotherhood" for the establishment of God's kingdom on earth.

To Zionists, like Theodor Herzl, founder of the movement, these were the sentiments of "amiable visionaries." To peg the improvement of the conditions of the Jews "on the goodness of all mankind," he wrote, was utopian. "Universal brotherhood is not even a beautiful dream. Conflict is essential to man's highest efforts." The problem of the Jews was political, Herzl concluded, the result of their statelessness and inability to be assimilated in the nations where they dwelled. Forced into money-lending and trading during the Middle Ages, excluded from other spheres of business, the rich among the Jews were now concentrated in speculative activities and the stock exchange, the focus of hatred for the capitalist system. Jewish intellectuals, barred from academic positions and means of livelihood, were becoming socialists and revolutionaries.

Hence we . . . suffer acutely in the struggle between the classes, because we stand in the most exposed position in both the capitalist and the socialist camps. . . . When we sink, we become a revolutionary proletariat, the corporals of every revolutionary party; and when we rise, there rises also our terrifying financial power.

To Jews steeped in the prophetic tradition, this situation itself exemplified the central and universal character of the Jewish question and its place in the scheme of human redemption: the problem of the Jews would be solved only when the problem of the classes and the nations was solved, only when a revolutionary transformation brought about the just order of the "messianic kingdom." This was the view of Marx and other Jewish revolutionaries and "idealists," who secularized the prophetic tradition of Israel in a program of social revolution. But the conservative Herzl sought a more pragmatic and immediate solution in ending the anomalous political character of the Jews' existence by establishing a Jewish state, like other states. If the cry of the anti-Semites was *Juden Raus* ("Jews Get Out"), wrote Herzl, who saw the slogan as the inner meaning of every anti-Semitic act, then why not get out, and gather in one's own territory, thereby solving the problem? By occupying their own territory, the Jews would become "normal" in effect, and thus could be finally admitted to the family of nations. In its own way, Zionism is the supreme assimilating tendency in Judaism.

For years the argument continued between the Zionists and the revolutionary socialists, who saw the solution to the Jewish problem as lying in the transformation of social existence in general. Nowhere was this debate carried on with more intensity than in the Diaspora communities of Eastern Europe. And then the Nazis seemed to give the Zionists a gruesome victory in the argument. It was this "victory" that won the Jewish majority to their cause. The actual creation of Israel did not take place as the fulfillment of Jewish dreams, but—in the words of Isaac Deutscher—"an act of Jewish despair." Deutscher had himself been one

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of those Jewish radicals who before the War had argued in the East European communities the position of revolutionary internationalism. In an article on Israel, written in 1954, he confessed to having

> *long since abandoned my anti-Zionism, which was based on a confidence in the European labour movement, or, more broadly, in European society and civilization, which that society and civilization have not justified. If, instead of arguing against Zionism in the 1920's and 1930's I had urged European Jews to go to Palestine, I might have helped to save some of the lives that were later extinguished in Hitler's gas chambers.*

"For the remnants of European Jewry," continued Deutscher, "the Jewish State had become an historic necessity." And yet, that recognition did not make him a Zionist. From a sinking ship, he argued, people jump onto a raft; the jumping is for them "an historic necessity" and the raft "the basis of their whole existence. But does it follow that the jumping should be made into a programme, or that one should take the raft—State as the basis of a political orientation?" Such was Deutscher's thought 20 years ago, and the interim events can only have served to intensify the doubts as to whether in the long run the Zionists have indeed had the better of the argument. Not only has the existence of a Jewish state not solved the Jewish problem, but the trading of Israel's moral mission and the passion of Jewish uniqueness for statehood and assimilation to the law of the nations has had an ironic issue, raising the tragic potential of Jewish history to yet new levels.

[NOT LIKE THE NATIONS]

For there can be no question that the most exposed Jewish community in the world today—the lightning rod of anti-Semitic antagonism and the fuse of communal peril—is Israel itself. An armed camp, surrounded on all sides by hostile and more numerous (if not yet more powerful) enemies with deep and seemingly irreconcilable grievances against her, Israel is poised on the brink of potential destruction (if not immediately, then in some not-too-distant future) and thus becomes an agonizing symbol of Jewish fate. This is the fact that creates the paranoia, not only of Israeli Jews, but of American Jews as well.

During the so-called Yom Kippur War of October 1973 (which was regarded by most Jews as an unprovoked assault, but which certainly was intended to halt the colonization of the Arab territories occupied in the 1967 war) Jews experienced "the deepest, most primitive fear of all," wrote the editor of *Commentary*. This fear,

> *rarely articulated, often repressed, but printed on the nerves of many who were astounded to discover that they even cared about Israel, let alone that they believed themselves to be personally implicated in its destiny, . . . [was that] . . . if Israel were to be annihilated, the Jews of America would also disappear. . . . For if for the second time in this century, the world were to stand by while a major Jewish community was being destroyed, it would be hard to evade the suspicion that an irresistible will was at work to wipe every last Jew off the face of the earth, to make this planet entirely* Judenrein. . . .

Israel has thus become the focus of a riveting fear of destruction among Jews generally, and among American Jews in particular. The real jeopardy of Israel, surrounded by enemies and aided by uncertain friends, is what provides substance to the otherwise incomprehensible apprehensions of the liberal Berkeley doctor who, amid all his securities and comforts, considers the Day of Reckoning as a practical matter, and judges my trust in my fellow human beings to be *naive*. For now that the Yiddish-speaking communities of the Diaspora have been destroyed, Israel is not only a symbolic center, but the living focus of Jewish cultural identity and spiritual life.

This is perhaps the most fateful aspect of the unsought conjunction of Zionist mission and Nazi Holocaust: the confusion of a universal ethical ideal with a particularist state. For the *galut* or exile of the people whom God had chosen for His witness symbolized, in Jewish tradition, the falling away of mankind from the path of the moral law. The return to Israel, or *aliyah* (literally ascent), was coupled with the idea of redemption and specifically with a redemption brought about by communal effort. When the Jews of the Diaspora prayed "next year in Jerusalem" on the Day of Atonement or during the Passover service commemorating the exodus from Egypt, they did not mean a journey to the Middle East; they were praying for a universal turning of the nations of mankind from their fallen ways, for the coming of the messianic kingdom on earth: the suffering of the Jews would end only when the suffering of humanity itself had ended.

For most Jews there was, of course, an element of confusion between the two ideas of return, since, like other communities, the Jewish community in its whole does not breathe the pure radiance of the divine spirit. (Even in the religious myth, the chosen-ness of the Jews does not raise them above the rest of mankind. Their very exile is a punishment for their own lapse from the moral ideal.) Otherwise, there would have been no spiritual wellspring for the original Zionist mission. For the Zionized majority, moreover, Jewish identity increasingly is no longer a spiritual but primarily an ethnic identification which involves a passionate but complex interest in the destiny of a particular nation-state. This ethnicization and nationalization of Jewish identity is taking place despite Israel's official effort to include a religious, and therefore universal, aspect to its legal definition of Jewishness.

Well, one might ask, what of it? Is that not the actual moral condition of mankind: national territorial identifications, which have a constant reference to larger ideals and aspirations, but remain firmly anchored in the morality of tribal loyalties and particularist self-interest? Such is indeed the case, and the Jews can hardly be faulted by the nations of mankind for adopting a morality common to them all. Nor can they legitimately be denied their claim (however misguided the hopes behind it) to self-determination and national "liberation," to a national state within whose territory they constitute a majority group. Such normality and such acceptance is precisely how the Zionists would like to see the Jewish problem pragmatically solved. But in the end it is not solved. Because, in the end, the Zionist solution comes up against the hard fact of Jewish destiny: Jews are not like the nations of mankind and the Jewish state is not like other states. The problem of uniqueness, as

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Last Israeli forces withdraw from West Bank of Suez Canal.

Palestinian refugee camp.

every previous effort to assimilate has shown, cannot be overcome by the adoption of a particular aspect of normality, even one so seemingly fundamental as statehood.

[A TRAGIC DESIGN]

One can begin with the fact of Israel's peril—the threat which constitutes a permanent and recurring injury to the optimism and faith of even so privileged and powerful a community as American Jews. No other nation-state in the contemporary world has had to wage continuous war for its very existence as has Israel for a quarter century, and is likely to continue to, for the foreseeable future. But that is just the symptom. What is the source?

In a way that can almost make one believe that there is a design to Jewish suffering, the exposed position of Israel in the international system today recapitulates the exposed position of the Jews in the capitalist societies of the 19th and early 20th centuries. One of the primary reasons for the renewed anti-Semitic assaults of that period was the civil emancipation of the Jews following the French and American Revolutions. As the artificial barriers against them were lifted, the Jews suddenly entered the social competition, to the dismay and increasing hostility of the classes and groups most threatened by their new "privilege." Just as the Jews were among the last to enter civil society, thereby becoming the scapegoats of its class turmoil, so they staked their claim to a nation-state at a pivotal juncture in its evolution, and came to occupy an exposed edge in its most fundamental conflicts.

Jewish nationalism took root at a time when the nation-state in Europe and America was no longer the embodiment of a liberating sovereignty, but was already transcending itself towards an imperial world system. At the time when it appeared as a solution to the Jewish problem, Jewish nationalism could find no land in which to establish itself that was not within the system of European and American imperialism. The Jews' collusion with empire arose both from necessity and from the logic of the bargain that Zionism made with the oppressor: give us a land, and we will get out. They were eventually given a permit to settle but not a nation. By the time 50 years later, when out of the nightmare of the Holocaust they took up arms against the imperial power itself in their struggle for self-determination, the Zionists were already face to face with the nationalist explosion their own settlement had caused.

If their future tragedy was woven like a fate into their historical situation, it was not unforeseen. In a book called *The Truth from the Land of Israel,* published in 1891, Ahad Ha'am, a leader of the Jewish "enlightenment," wrote of the effects of the "return" on the early Jewish settlers in Palestine:

> *They were slaves in the land of their exile and suddenly they find themselves in the midst of unlimited freedom, a wild kind of freedom which can only be found in a country like Turkey [i.e., the Ottoman Empire]. This sudden change has produced in them a tendency to despotism, which always happens when "a slave becomes a king." They treat the Arabs with hostility and cruelty, trespassing on their territory unjustly, berating them shamefully without any valid reason and then boasting about it.*

It probably could be said that while virtually every nation is built on an original conquest and subjection, often—as in the case of America—including the annihilation of the original inhabitants, few if any were accomplished with more effort at cooperation and more consciousness of

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guilt towards the native inhabitants than was the Jewish colonization of Palestine and the dispossession of its Arab population. Moreover, because of their own numerical weakness, and the political and military dominance of the British in the whole Mandate area as well as in the encircling Arab states, the Jews had less control over the outcome than any comparable colonizers in history. They remained throughout, on the exposed edge of the historic conflict between imperialism and nationalism, facing on the one side the British oppressor and its client Arab regimes, and on the other, the rising tide of Arab and Palestinian nationalism.

Yet the fact remains that the dispossession and denial took place. Furthermore it is far from over. Thus, while the state of Israel is the embodied national idea of a people who for two thousand years were without a land and a state, in the interests of Jewish "survival," Israel's leaders continue to deny in principle the very existence of the people they have displaced, and to thwart their claims to land and statehood. "It was not as though there was a Palestinian people in Palestine considering itself a Palestinian people and we came and threw them out and took their country away from them," explained Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir in 1969; "they did not exist."

There was a partial truth in this. The Arabs who lived in Palestine originally were not a self-consciously united people. But under the impact of their displacement and dispossession by the Jews, and in part inspired by the Jewish example, they developed a national self-consciousness and identity. Yet because the rights of this people challenge their own, it has become a policy of the Israeli state to deny the national reality in whose creation they themselves have been so intimately involved. The Palestinians, in the view of Israel's Foreign Office, "are not a party to the conflict between Israel and the Arab states," and "have no role to play" in any peace settlement. Denied a legitimate voice, weak, disorganized, living in refugee camps and under Israeli military rule, the Palestinians have responded with acts of terror as a cruel but therefore unevadable statement: *We exist.*

[A FIFTH COLUMN]

The outlines of Israel's present plight were partly foreseen by Ahad Ha'am in the days when the program of a binational state of Arabs and Jews in Palestine was still a prevailing idea among the Zionists themselves (it was dropped only in 1942): ". . . a Jewish state would be poison for our nation and drag it down into the dust," he wrote.

> *Our small state would never attain a political power worthy of the name, for it would be but a football between its neighbors, and but exist by diplomatic chicanery and constant submission to whoever was dominant at the time. Thus we should become a small and low people in spiritual servitude, looking with envy toward the mighty fist.*

Israel has proved to be stronger than Ahad Ha'am guessed, but not strong enough to avoid the spiritual servitude which he feared. Unable to stand independently, the Israelis had to seek out the powerful and to curry favor with the "mighty fist" for the sake of their survival. Militarily and economically dependent on the United States—the chief imperial power of the age—Israel's leadership has not stopped short even at supporting America's genocidal war in Vietnam, under the argument of its own survival. (In not so different a fashion, small subject nations in the Third World, like Ireland, Argentina, and Iran, colluded with the Nazis during World War II out of a narrow nationalist attempt to gain leverage against Germany's imperial rivals.)

Set in an exploited and prized region of the world, surrounded by hostility, Israel has embraced the role of a fifth column ally of the imperial status quo and a determined opponent of radical Arab nationalism. This role had practical consequences of far-reaching significance during the invasion of Suez in 1956 by the French and British, and also in specific Israeli threats prior to the 1967 war—for

Palestinian children, Beirut, Lebanon.

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example, to intervene in behalf of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, if that regime should be toppled from the left.

In its role as an agent of Western imperialism, Israel is very like the regimes in Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Iran, which exist parasitically on the stream of international oil. By any reckoning, however, Israel is of far less importance to the West than any of these three, a fact which makes Israel's U.S. support sometimes tenuous and ultimately uncertain. But unlike them, Israel is also an "alien intruder." Thus, taking a leaf from the anti-Semitic traditions of the Christian West, the Arab rulers have found that by scapegoating the Israeli Jews they can obscure their own betrayal of the larger interests of the peoples of the Middle East. It is an effort made easy for them by Israel's continuing oppression of the Arabs of Palestine—not only in the denial of Palestinian self-determination and in the military occupation of the Arab territories, but in Israel itself.

For the subjection of Arabs in Israel is not only a contingent feature of Israeli society, but a principle of the Israeli state. The Jewish character of the Israeli state, a joint product of the Zionist dream and the Nazi nightmare, is discriminatory *de jure* and not merely *de facto*. Under the Law of Return, which was designed to open the doors that the Christian nations had shut to refugee Jews, and also to sustain the Zionist hope for an ingathering of the dispersed nation, Jews—but not Arabs, or any other non-Jews—are granted automatic citizenship status upon arrival in Israel. Israeli Jews, but not Israeli Arabs, are encouraged to procreate and increase their numbers. Similarly, significant tracts of Israeli land, and even whole villages, are reserved for exclusive Jewish ownership and settlement. There are other official and legal devices as well, which consign non-Jewish citizens of Israel to second-class status and emphasize the chosen quality of Israel's Jewish majority.

At first these policies seem like a grotesque inversion of the principles of the Nazi persecutor and his Aryan myth, and for certain elements of the Israeli population—the religious fanatics and the irredentist right—they clearly are. There is more than an element of the mystique of blood and soil in the original Zionist impulse, while the myth of the master race is a simple perversion of the Old Testament idea: without the ethical dimension of the Covenant, which binds God's elect to universalist principles and a special burden of suffering, all that remains of the notion of the Chosen People is a chauvinist arrogance and self-righteousness.

The basic ground of what can only be called the racist principles of the Israeli state is not ideology, however, but the pragmatism of survival in the context of a basic pessimism about the human condition (a pessimism confirmed by the isolation of Israel in the Arab Middle East). The raison d'être of Israel is that it is the Jewish raft-state: ultimately Jews cannot depend on any other group for their survival; they must go it alone. If Jews lose control of Israel's government, Israel loses its raison d'être. Therefore, the Arab population of Israel must be kept smaller, weaker, and subordinate to the Jewish population of Israel, *as a principle of survival.* Since Israel is a tiny ghetto state (such is the ironic issue of Jewish nationalism in an age when the nation-state is no longer an adequate vehicle of sovereignty), systematic discrimination, however liberal and humane its forms, must be a constantly operative principle of Israeli politics.

["LET MY PEOPLE GO"]

What could be more alien to Judaism and the whole spirit of Jewish history than this result of Zionism's efforts to promote Jewish survival by making the Jews like the nations? Yet because of the centrality of Israel in Jewish consciousness, this distortion of Jewish values has had wide repercussions in the Jewish community at large. Moreover, because of the dependent relationship of Israel to the United States and the pivotal role of American Jewry in maintaining that link in Israel's survival, this distortion has been injected into the attitudes of the American Jewish community with particular force.

One perverse but illuminating instance of this effect has been the campaign in behalf of Soviet Jewry, undoubtedly the major political effort of the Jewish organizations in America for the last decade. Boycotts have been maintained against Soviet cultural events; demonstrations have been staged at Soviet embassies; gold Stars of David inscribed "Let My People Go" have been sold as fund-raising devices in temples across the nation; and a powerful political lobby, built in Washington, has only recently joined hands with the Pentagon opponents of détente to sponsor the so-called Jackson Amendment to the Administration's trade bill. This legislation would make the whole progress of new trade agreements with the Soviet Union contingent upon a relaxation of its repressive emigration policies so that discontented Soviet Jews could go to Israel.

Even though the propaganda to American Jews during this campaign conceded that the immediate threat to the three million Soviet Jews was "spiritual destruction" through the denial of religious and cultural forms of expression rather than a repetition of the Nazi Holocaust, it has nonetheless featured prominently the theme of deadly parallels. The Holocaust thus remains the pivot of the Jewish political imagination. In particular, the implication is always present and often articulated that American Jews are in danger of repeating their alleged crime of "silence" in the dreadful hour when European Jewry was extinguished. ". . . what torments me most," concludes Elie Wiesel in *The Jews of Silence,* one of the major texts of the campaign, "is not the Jews of silence I met in Russia, but the silence of the Jews I live among today."

Several of the principal features of this campaign, which has been so central to the politics of the American Jewish community, illustrate the pitfalls of a Zionized Judaism, of converting an ethical-ideal-as-ethnic-identity into an ethnic program parading as an ethical ideal.

In the first place, the Jewish community is seeking, in the name of a universalist principle of human rights, to advance a particularist interest—the emigration rights of Soviet Jews. Although the anti-Semitic nature of the Soviet persecution is undeniable, it is not the whole story by any means. The religious and cultural persecution of the Jews in the Soviet Union is part of a more general persecution of religious and ethnic minorities. And these persecutions are related to the suppression of political and intellectual

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[Comment]

Red Ink Capitalism:

Banking on Borrowed Time

"We have reached a terminus, for an historically determined process is now ending. Its death throes are not pleasant, for there is no guarantee that what is to follow will be any better."

Capitalism is dying. In country after country, governments are overwhelming the capitalist banking institutions by outbidding them in the interest rate they pay on savings. Capitalist enterprise, consequently, can no longer look to the public for new savings with which to finance debt-free expansion or to establish significant new ventures. Even debt capital grows more and more difficult to raise. The president of North Carolina's Duke Power Company, for example, announcing a cut of almost $1.5 billion in Duke's expansion program through 1979, states his conviction that it is impossible to raise the huge sums needed.

The power of governments to draw savings out of the banking system—to recycle growing public debt as it falls due—has suppressed the capitalist ethic of financing industrial growth through personal thrift. But this is more than an ethic. To capitalism it is a necessity. And the well has run dry. Capitalism cannot survive these conditions—and cannot change them.

This pattern of government preemption of available financial resources has received its most complete expression yet in England. There the government, to attract personal savings to itself, has adopted what is called index-linking, a notion that is sure to spread to the U.S. and elsewhere in the capitalist world. The attraction is aimed at a public already well aware that their savings growth through interest has risen much slower than the cost of living. Depositors in government index-linked savings accounts, and purchasers of index-linked government bonds, will receive no interest payments on their savings accounts. Annually, however, the face amount of their savings will be adjusted for increase in the cost-of-living index (16.5 percent in England during the 12 months ended June 30, 1974). Moreover, savers who do not withdraw their funds before maturity will receive, as an incentive, a bonus over and above the conserved buying power of their savings. There is also what Wall Street calls a "kicker" in the deal. Whatever increase in personal cash assets results from index-linking is to be exempt from income tax and capital gains tax, on the sound principle that the saver has gained nothing if the buying power of the deposit at the end of the period exactly equals its buying power at the start.

The English plan is not designed initially on a scale so large as to draw major deposits away from the banking system. It is limited to old-age pensioners, and to wage and salary earners who will be invited to invest up to about $50 a month—through payroll deductions—for up to five years. But any thought that the plan will remain so limited—or in Europe will remain uniquely English—is out of the question. From the point of view of government debt recycling, the scheme is so attractive, and so favorable to savers terrified by inflation, that it is impossible to confine it to one country. European governments have for some time been considering equivalent plans. The spread of the system seems inevitable.

Note, however, that England's scheme to conserve the

by Terence McCarthy

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purchasing power of savings constitutes in economic reality an interest-free loan to the government. Measured in purchasing power, the government will repay no more than it borrowed—a total denial of the capitalist precept of rewarding thrift (and of a lofty structure of economic theory from Ricardo onwards).

Even this, however, is superior in elementary honesty to the public sales of bonds and notes by other governments, yielding simple interest rates below the compound annual increase in their cost of living. These governments, in economic fact, are paying back in purchasing power *less* than they borrow. They add outrage to fraud by levying taxes on the interest they *do* pay, compounding their theft of the buying power of the people's savings.

[ECONOMIC SUICIDE]

Throughout what we still call the capitalist world, the worker who tries to save has the opportunity today, as in England, of getting no economic reward for deferring his consumption or, as in the U.S., of getting back less purchasing power than he puts in and of paying a tax for this privilege. The necessity for governments continuously to recycle their interest-bearing debts, and the shortening of the public debt maturity (down to two years, eleven months in the U.S. in early 1974 compared with nine years, five months in 1947), offer to savers in the U.S. a choice between losing purchasing power at a slower rate if they save through government instruments or at a faster rate if they save through banks.

For example, the U.S. government, on August 6, 1974, auctioned $2.25 billion of 33-months 9-percent Treasury notes in denominations as low as $1000. The effective yield of the auction was 8.59 percent, which compares to a 10.7 percent annual rate of rise in consumer prices, and of course is taxable. This yield, nevertheless, was 2.74 annual percentage points higher than private thrift institutions offered, even at compound interest, for comparable maturities. On the following day the U.S. Treasury auctioned $1.75 billion of 9-percent 6-year notes at an 8.75 percent yield and on August 8 auctioned $400 million of 25-year bonds at 8.63 percent yield, all this as part of a $4.6 billion refunding of government debt falling due. There was a vast outpouring of private savings from banks and savings institutions because of the higher yield and greater safety that government offered. The net effect—as in the English case—is to limit the basic lending power. By logical extension, the capacity of capitalism to expand—and thus to remain capitalism—is now jeopardized by the capital requirements of the capitalist government.

Bankers, in alarm, complain of the hemorrhage of savings deposits. They might better complain of the *hara kiri* which the capitalist system is committing in full public view. For one consequence of the beating which governments are giving the capitalist savings institutions—with interest rates as their club—is the pressure upon lending rates to reach still higher levels. But high interest rates are threatening the profitability of private enterprises (some prime rate borrowers in the U.S., it is reported, are now paying as high as 16 percent for short-term loans). The pass-through of high interest rates to increases in product prices is causing a decline in unit sales of many products—notably in new housing, new cars, consumer appliances, furniture, textiles and related items.

Today's interest rates ensure the failure of many enterprises. As an example, one plastic products producer stocked up on petroleum-based inventory when the shortage of oil supplies was relieved. Orders on its books are now down 40 percent below their monthly average before the oil embargo, largely because customers' profit margins are not high enough to exceed today's interest rates at commercial banks (and are far below interest rates charged by "factors" who discount corporate receivables). This company is laying off employees because its customers cannot pay today's borrowing costs.

Banks, however, must somehow pay interest yields high enough to compete with the yields on government issues. This they cannot do unless they increase still further the rates they charge on the loans they extend. Outrush of savings deposits, moreover, may reduce the absolute lending capacity of the banks, forcing lending rates still higher and decreasing the amount which banks dare advance as loans.

In short, we have reached the point of collision between government finance capital and private finance capital. Governments' needs for funds, in all advanced countries, can be met only by making savings in private institutions less attractive than in government instruments. The capitalist system, in the traditional connotation of the term, is impotent before the finance needs of the governmental forms which capitalism created for its own perpetuation and protection.

[THE TWO FACES OF CAPITALISM]

There is, of course, another side to this picture. Government has saved some major corporations from extinction. Consolidated Edison, for example, has not only been saved by the State of New York from chapter 11 of the bankruptcy laws (which would have reduced its electrical output by not one single watt-hour), but has actually announced resumption of dividend payments (at less than one-half their previous rate). How? By the State taking over $500 million of Con Ed's obligations on nuclear-power account. What this really means is that Con Ed's dividends are to be paid by New York taxpayers—as Con Ed's debts will be. In previous years Lockheed, Penn Central, and Chrysler were saved when the Federal Reserve Board assured the large commercial banks that the Fed would take up all the paper of these companies held by the banks. The Franklin National Bank was rescued in 1974 when the Federal Reserve Board advanced it at least $1 billion, with some estimates running as high as $1.45 billion.

A new contradiction has entered the capitalist system. On the one hand, government outbids private banks on the basis of interest yields. On the other hand, government rescues big corporations and commercial banks if they get into serious trouble. This may seem schizophrenic. But when has capitalism not presented two faces? First, as liberator from feudalism and founder of the industrial system, which has immeasurably increased living standards in advanced countries. Second, as ruthless exploiter and despoiler of whoever was too weak to withstand its perpetual attempt to reduce

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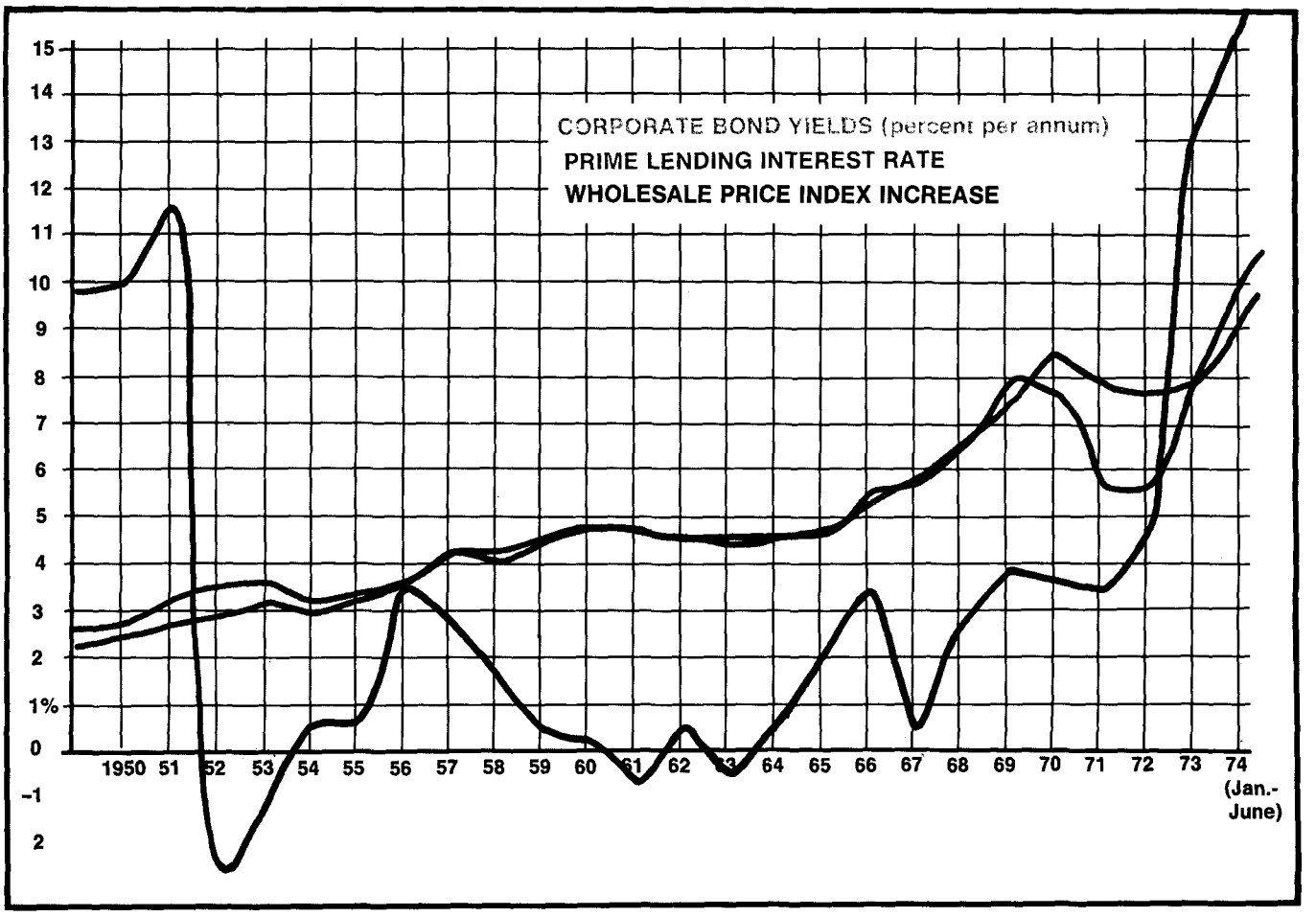

them to bare subsistence and industrial servitude. The contradiction of contradictions, in fact, is that the powers of government, and their means of application created by capitalism to serve capitalism, are now so vast and so oppressive in capability that capitalism itself has become their subject. The executive committees of the national bourgeoisie have become so massive that the bourgeoisie has been subdued by them. Government is now almost all-powerful, within the constraints implicit in the contradictions between government needs which government was intended to meet and dares not disregard altogether.

My Yugoslav friends have often commented upon the emergence of socialist forms within capitalism, a perception shared by many people in the United States—to the acute discomfort of some. I doubt that they would describe this new turn of events, with government interest rates overwhelming bank and corporate bond yields, as emergence of a socialist form. Most surely I do not.

It is, I think, a thermometric measure of a disease of today's capitalism—namely, that the necessity for capital to expand has associated with it a need for advance financing beyond the capabilities of the system to create any longer by social abstinence. The capital must be created by fiat, i.e., by monetary inflation, designed to cause a redistribution of national income adverse to consumption.

[A TIME OF CONFUSION]

Here we enter an important area of dispute. Not that the dispute has yet become widespread. It has not. We are, in fact, in a time of deep, disbelieving silence among economists. What for years they propounded as eternal laws of (presumably) an eternal system have been disproved by events. Things are not behaving as their "laws" require that they must. And apparently there is developing no new set of disciplines appropriate to the changed circumstances but, instead, an inward, personal protest that what *is* happening *cannot* happen. It is as though the logicians of capitalism cannot accommodate themselves to the facts of the State Capitalism into which, perhaps, society has already evolved.

Two recent statements by men in high office—one the fallen President of the United States, the second the Chairman of the Federal Reserve Board—indicate today's confusion. Richard Nixon, on July 25, 1974, stated, "A policy to check inflation is fundamentally a policy to curb the growth of demand relative to the growth of supply. . . . Our strategy must have two elements—mainly restraining demand in the short run and expanding supply in the long run."

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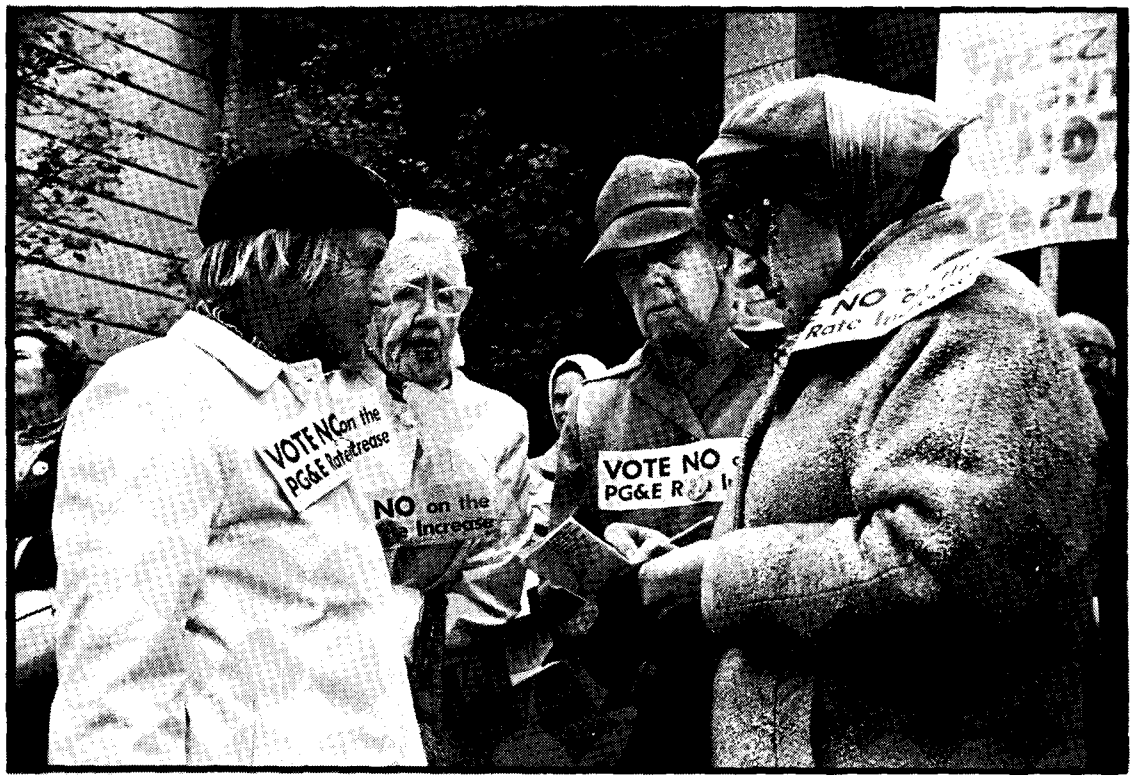

Buying Power

Towards a Public Utility Network

"Public power by itself isn't likely to transform America. But it is a concrete, workable example of community control and public ownership that might lead to wider political programs."

The April 1973 ballot in Berkeley, California, presented voters with some unusual choices. Four radicals were running for city council. One of the several initiatives on the ballot called for legalizing marijuana in the city. But the item that seemed to generate the most opposition was an initiative innocuously referred to as "Measure 8."

Measure 8 called for municipal takeover of Pacific Gas and Electric's power distribution facilities in Berkeley. Put on the ballot by a strong consumer action group called RIOT (Refusers of Illegal and Oppressive Taxes), it drew the combined wrath of the Chamber of Commerce, the *Berkeley Daily Gazette,* the League of Women Voters, two of the incumbent council members running for reelection, and, of course, Pacific Gas and Electric itself. Masquerading as the "Berkeley No on 8 Committee," PG&E used its own meter readers as election canvassers. It coordinated tens of thousands of dollars' worth of newspaper ads, radio spots, and voter mailings.

On April 17, Measure 8 lost by close to a three-two margin. Proponents of municipalization had been outspent by more than twenty to one. PG&E and such financial backers as the Southern Pacific Land Company, three California banks, and a dozen other large corporations had poured nearly $100,000 into the campaign. This amounted to roughly five dollars for every "no" vote.

Supporters of public power in Berkeley, though defeated in 1973, carried forward a long history of sporadic local struggle for public municipal utilities in America. There were four isolated municipal power plants in 1882. Today, there are more than 2,800 public power systems, of which 1,775 are municipally owned.* But these public utilities, which include more than 90 percent of the nation's electric

*** Of the others, 26 are operated by federal agencies; 112 by state, county, or district agencies; and 932 by rural cooperatives. There are 244 privately owned systems in the United States.**

by Thomas Brom and Edward Kirshner

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systems, generate and distribute only one-quarter of America's power.

Municipal power systems are usually quite small. About a third of them are in five states—Nebraska, Kansas, Iowa, Minnesota, and Ohio—each with over 100 municipal plants. Public power began in the 1880s in small towns. With a few exceptions, it has remained there. When electricity was introduced, privately owned utilities developed the dense, profitable urban markets first. Rural America never did get electricity until the federal government began the Rural Electrification Administration in 1935. In between were the small towns, where people wanted electricity and had enough population density to make the job financially feasible.

The subsequent growth of public power, however, was never peaceable. The private utility industry—the "power trust," as it was known in the late 19th century—was notorious for corruption, rate manipulation, and profiteering. Public power was its enemy. On the other side, radical populists organized against the utility monopolists. Public ownership planks appeared in the People's Party platform in the 1890s, in the labor-populist alliances in the Midwest during the same period, and in local reform platforms from 1896 onward.

Later, though agrarian radicals continued to support public power, the issue began to lose its ideological overtones. Some of the largest public power systems were built around the turn of the century, sponsored not by radicals but by "good government" urban reformers. These included Tacoma (1893), Jacksonville (1895), and Seattle (1902). By 1910, the number of public systems had reached 1,534. Cleveland began municipal power operation in 1914; Los Angeles and Springfield, Illinois, in 1916.

Sixty years later, the "investor-owned utilities" (IOUs) are regulated, respectable, and not nearly so unpopular. But there is still no peace between them and the public power systems. Bitterly fought takeover attempts by private utilities are frequent and often successful. The American Public Power Association (APPA) claims that it is good business for cities to operate local power distribution. Unfortunately, it is also good business for private corporations to do so. Many of the strongest surviving public power cities lie near federal dams, protected from private utility incursion by a steady source of cheap energy. These systems are the heirs of the New Deal, which produced TVA, Boulder Dam, the Bonneville Project, and hundreds of smaller power plants. But many of the other municipal systems, scattered across the Midwest and down the Pacific Coast, are more vulnerable. While they have favorable economies and a record of long public service to sustain them, solid political support has virtually evaporated. And in the past the difference between them and the IOUs has been measured in popular support, not simply in the superiority of the public systems' cash-flow charts.

Today, of course, the superiority of the cash-flow charts may take on renewed importance. Consumers hard pressed by inflation may welcome the cheaper electricity customarily provided by municipal power. To be sure, energy shortages have put the squeeze on public power systems. Long-standing ties between large private utilities and the major energy companies put public power at a great disadvantage in the scramble for generator fuels. However, public power may find opportunities as well as difficulties in the "energy crisis." Oil shortages, power curtailments, and the possibility of rationing have all been met with a good deal of anger and suspicion. For the first time since the New Deal, public demands are fostering proposals in Congress and state legislatures for government intervention in the energy industry. Electric utilities regularly find their requests for rate increases challenged.

If the role of public enterprise in energy is to be expanded, public power systems offer a useful model. They work. And they bring a variety of benefits to their customers.

[PAYING LESS FOR MORE]

The economics of public vs. private power are straightforward. Public power systems yield cheaper rates. Comparative statistics compiled over the past century show that this holds true for cities of all sizes. Recent Federal Power Commission reports are equally convincing. FPC figures for public and private utilities in 1971 show lower costs per kilowatt-hour (kwh) in virtually every aspect of the public systems' operation. The savings are even more remarkable considering the typically smaller scale at which publicly owned utilities operate.*

Where do these savings come from? Exclusive of retained earnings, municipal utilities show an average of 30 percent lower costs per kwh delivered than private utilities (see Table). Of that total savings, 10 percent is due to municipal operating and maintenance efficiencies. Public systems spend less on advertising, less for public relations, less for lobbying, less for local political donations, less for accounting and collections, less for executive salaries, and less for internal bureaucracy. Also, public systems both produce and purchase their power more cheaply (5 percent of the savings). They are exempt from income taxes (20 percent). Their other taxes are lower too, though payments made in lieu of taxes reduce the savings from this item to 9 percent of the total. As public agencies, they can borrow money at cheaper interest rates (9 percent of the savings). Public systems have less-expensive plants for an equivalent number of customers and also sell more electricity per customer. This reduces the costs of depreciation and amortization per kwh delivered (8 percent of the savings). And finally, the absence of dividend payments to investors accounts for 39 percent of savings.

Public power systems, since they don't have investors to attract or pay off, retain more than twice the percentage of revenues that private utilities retain. In either system, these reinvested earnings increase the net value of the system. But in the case of private utilities, such an increase in value is reflected only in higher stockholder equity; each share of stock is in principle worth more. For public utilities, the increase in value benefits the municipality or the customers. Rates can remain low. The utility can finance its own development without resorting to borrowing.

The Edison Electric Institute, an organization sponsored by the private companies, makes much of the fact that

*** The average municipal system has about 15,000 customers; private systems average about 250,000 customers.**

Photo Courtesy of Bay-Cal/E&GP

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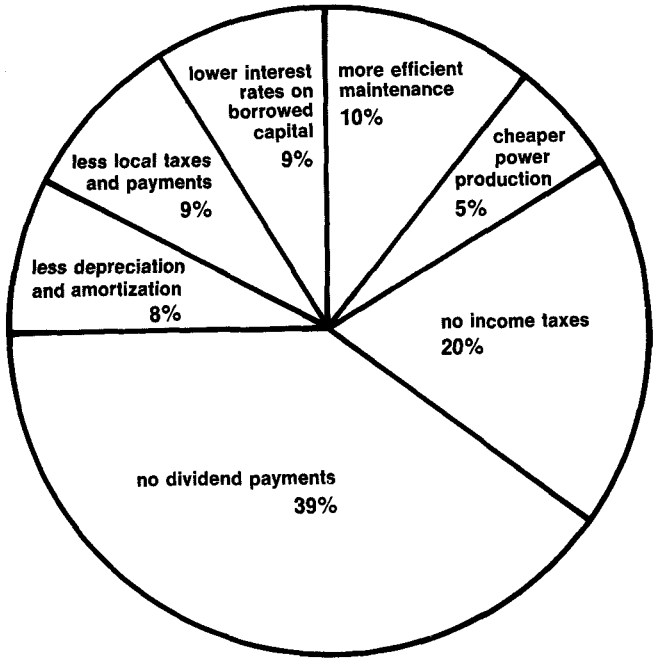
lower interest rates on borrowed capital 9%
more efficient maintenance 10%
cheaper power production 5%
less local taxes and payments 9%
less depreciation and amortization 8%
no income taxes 20%
no dividend payments 39%

WHERE THE SAVINGS ARE FROM

public systems pay no taxes and are able to borrow through low-interest, tax-exempt bonds. According to the companies, public systems can sell cheaper power for these reasons alone. But the comparisons reveal that tax and interest benefits account for only a little more than one-third of the difference between public and private systems. The predominant factors remain dividend payments and efficiency.

Total taxes per kwh paid by private utilities do exceed those of municipal power systems. But these corporate taxes are paid to federal, state, and a variety of regional and local agencies. Municipal power systems pay virtually all of their contributions in lieu of taxes directly to the city's general fund. California public power cities, for example, receive about ten times more money per kwh in in-lieu payments than IOU-served cities receive in taxes. Thus local communities (though not other governmental units) benefit doubly from publicly owned power. Lower utility rates are combined with higher net revenues flowing to the city. The Pasadena municipal power system contributes 16 percent of its gross revenues, by city charter, to the general fund. The public system in Glendale contributes 15 percent; Burbank, 7 percent; and Los Angeles, with the country's largest city-owned power system, 5 percent, or $11.5 million annually. All four of these systems in the Los Angeles basin have lower rates for average residential use than the regional private utility, Southern California Edison.

Far from "missing" private utility tax payments, public power cities also enjoy lower property tax rates than comparable cities served by private companies. In public-power Alameda, California, the city tax rate per $100 assessed valuation is $2.16, compared to $3.47 in PG&E-served Berkeley. In Burbank and Glendale, it's $1.59 and $1.20, compared to $2.25 in nearby private-power Santa Monica. In Palo Alto, it's $.74 compared to $1.34 in PG&E-served Mountain View.

Certainly there are factors in these comparisons that are unrelated to utility system ownership. But in each case payments to the city by the municipal systems are higher per kwh than tax payments by the IOUs to private-power cities. Moreover, even if most of a public system's savings take the form of lower rates rather than in-lieu payments, the effect on taxes may be beneficial. Low electric rates attract businesses, and a healthy local economy helps keep property tax levies down.

Both property tax rates and electric power rates—public as well as private—are generally regressive. Usually, however, there is a net progressive benefit for residential customers in public power cities if both property taxes and utility rates are lower than those in surrounding communities. Most municipal systems have achieved both lower power rates and lower taxes. Anaheim even mandates lower rates than the surrounding private utility territory in its city charter. Burbank and Glendale are taking the first steps toward equalized power rates (rather than reduced rates for large users), which would add to the progressivity of the system.

[GUARANTEED WASTE]

A look at the special position of "regulated" private utilities helps explain why the comparison between them and public systems turns out as it does. The private power companies are, of course, owned by stockholders who demand a return on their investment. But since the 1930s, the IOUs are also government-recognized monopolies that are subject to regulation in return for a guaranteed rate of profit. The regulated "rate of return" allowed by the Federal Power Commission and state public utility commissions currently ranges between 7 and 10 percent. Although these figures appear low, the percentages are deceptive.

For one thing, investor-owned utilities routinely exceed their regulated rates of return on private capital investments unrelated to utility operation. Many IOUs reinvest interest and earnings outside of the utility system, thus producing an unregulated secondary income for the benefit of their stockholders. Average return to stockholders' equity for the IOUs, after taxes, has equaled that for all manufacturing corporations since the mid-1950s. It has actually been higher in recent years. Most private utility return figures are currently between 10 and 15 percent, but Citizens Utility of Arizona and other IOUs have sometimes reached 25 percent levels.

Hidden investments by utilities are only part of the strange world of regulated monopoly economics. The phrase "rate of return" in investment analysis usually means return to owners' equity. But in the special language of the IOUs, "rate of return" essentially means total return on the company's entire investment, both debt and equity.

By using the entire investment as the IOUs' rate base, the regulating agencies offer a premium on overinvestment. The higher the capital investment in land, buildings, equipment, etc., the higher the resulting dollar amount of profit allowed by the regulating agencies. If the allowable rate of return remains higher than the cost of borrowing money for new investment, the utility can increase its effective rate of

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return by investing more capital and increasing the rate base.

The 1971 FPC comparative statistics on utility plant size and power cost per kwh suggest the IOUs' overcapitalization. Municipal power plants have 10 percent less net electric plant per customer than the IOUs, but they deliver 12.2 percent more kwh per customer. The public power systems thus deliver more electricity per customer from less plant than the private utilities. This is a good indication of the difference in capital efficiency.

The irony of governmental regulation is that by guaranteeing a rate of return based on total investment, the regulators have destroyed any incentive for the IOUs to hold down capital costs. In fact, as we have seen, the IOUs have a disincentive for building cheaper, more efficient plants. Moreover, the companies can set their rates to cover all their operating expenses *before* the rate of return is calculated, and can pass on all fuel increases. They thus have no incentive to locate cheaper sources of energy or introduce less costly operating and maintenance policies.

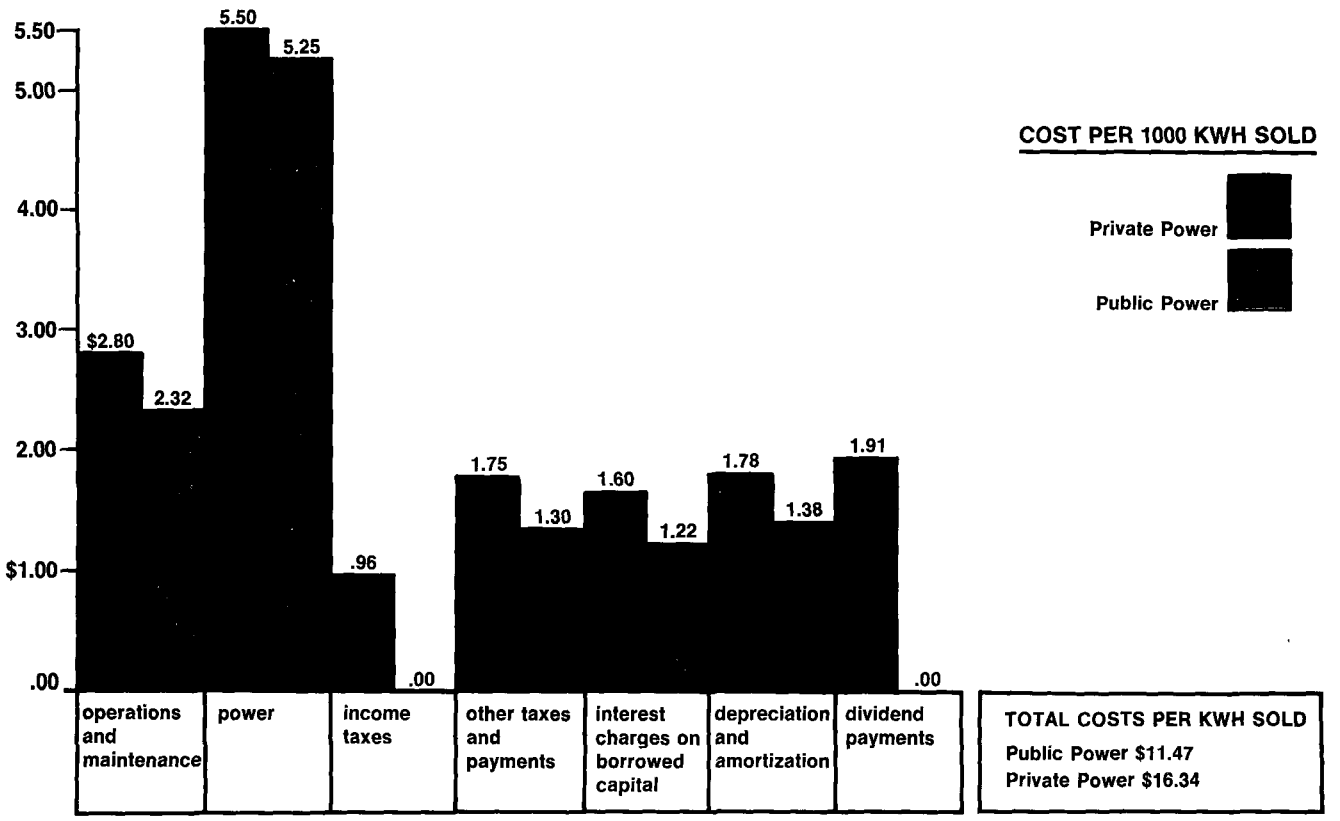
[POWER TO THE PEOPLE]

Municipally owned power systems are not regulated by other government agencies, although they do supply complete figures on plant operation to the Federal Power Commission. Cost per kwh and utility rates over the past 90 years show how good the public systems' financial performance has been. Their average costs, and the electric rates that reflect them, would be even lower if roughly half the systems did not have to buy their power wholesale from private utilities. (The American Public Power Association reports that 912 municipal systems buy supplies from private utilities. Most are too small to construct and run their own power plants and are unable to purchase from public suppliers.)

Until the Otter Tail Power Company decision was upheld by the Supreme Court in 1973, private utilities routinely refused to "wheel" power from alternative suppliers across their lines to municipal systems. As a result, many public power cities were totally dependent upon local private generating companies for their power.

Now, since they can combine and interconnect their systems across existing power lines, many of the municipals are constructing regional generation and transmission facilities. Wisconsin's Dairyland Power Cooperative, serving farms in Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Iowa, is building a large steam generating plant for use as a power pool. To get the economies of scale, Dairyland is building a larger unit than it needs. It plans to sell the excess to private utilities.

In the Pacific Northwest, the emphasis is on planning a "hydro-thermal" program to augment the power of the Bonneville Dams with large-scale steam generation. In the Missouri basin, the existence of the cooperative Missouri Basin Systems Group made possible an REA loan to Basin Electric Power Co-op for a 400,000-kilowatt coal-burning unit. And the 11 public power cities of the Northern California Power Agency plan a geothermal operation near the



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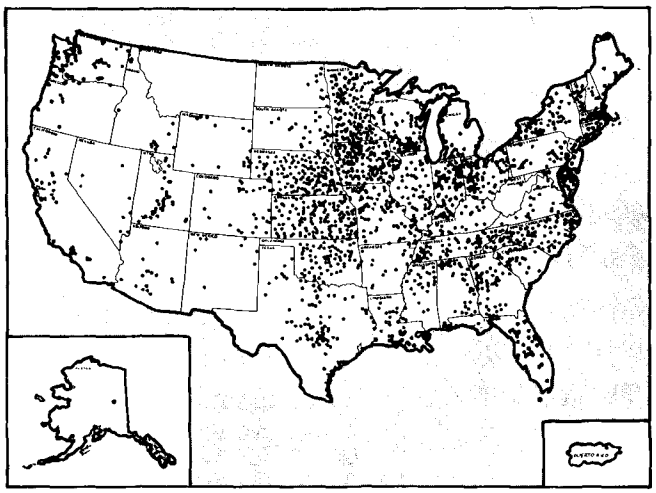
town of Geyserville. Generating power from steam produced deep within the earth's crust, the cooperative project is slated for completion by 1977.

In Southern California, the municipal utilities have intervened in Edison's licensing and rate proceedings to demand limited participation in major Edison plant construction. By threatening antitrust action and delaying crucial plant expansion, the small public utilities have encouraged the formation of joint-venture projects with private utilities. With a minimum of capital, formerly small public utility departments and wholesale buyers have thereby gained entrance to huge coal-fired and nuclear plants they could never have built on their own. The result has been continued lower rates for public power cities surrounded by the Southern California Edison Company.

Right now, simple economics may be the strongest argument for local public power. But another argument has to do with the advantages of local control. Public power facilities are commonly operated by city governments, local district agencies, or consumer cooperatives. These structures may be just as bureaucratic and unresponsive as any corporation. But at least they can be changed when the need arises. Local ownership means local jobs. It means local control of management decisions, such as plant location, rate of expansion, placement of power lines, type of power generation, and of course electricity rates. In a more general sense, local ownership means the possibility of community decision making and a feeling of responsibility to the public.

The recent fuel crisis in the Los Angeles basin showed how responsive public power agencies can be. With 48 percent of their low-sulfur generating oil cut off by the Arab embargo, the public power systems of Los Angeles, Burbank, Glendale, and Pasadena acted immediately to curtail power consumption and coordinate emergency fuel purchases. Each of the cities enacted legislation mandating cutbacks of 10 to 15 percent for residential customers and 20 percent for commercial power users. The smaller municipal agencies in Burbank, Glendale, and Pasadena pooled their fuel purchases and storage capacity. Receiving only minimal help from the Southern California Edison Company, the four public systems managed to secure needed fuel supplies while cutting power consumption by nearly 17 percent.



Dots indicate publicly-owned electric systems in the U.S.

[BITTER COMBAT]

With all the benefits of public power, the question remains: why aren't there more community-owned systems? The answer to that lies with the private utilities and the carefully urtured relationships they maintain with state legislatures and Congress.

Coordinated national public relations, lobbying, and utility acquisition campaigns have been a hallmark of the private utilities since the days of the Samuel Insull power trust in the 1920s. During those years the National Electric Light Association (NELA) sought to discredit the growing public power movement with furious red-baiting tactics. NELA helped defeat the California Water and Power Act in 1922, a bill that would have created a state-owned power system patterned after the famous Ontario hydroelectric power system in Canada. It attacked Pennsylvania Governor Gifford Pinchot and New York Governor Alfred E. Smith, both of whom supported a national "superpower" grid of public systems. Any congressmen who supported plans for the construction of federal dams on the Tennessee or Colorado rivers became NELA's enemies as well.

Organizations that sought to coordinate the small municipal systems were special targets. These included the Public Ownership League of America, the National Popular Government League, North Dakota's Non-Partisan League, state Municipal Ownership Leagues, and the Socialist Party of America. But the exposure of Insull power corruption during Federal Trade Commission hearings in the late 1920s discredited the NELA. Several years later it was disbanded, only to be replaced with four specialized groups: the Edison Electric Institute, the Electric Companies Advertising Program, the Electric Companies Public Information Program, and the National Association of Electric Companies.

Much of the conflict between private and public utilities now is fought by proxy in state legislatures. Where the private utilities are especially powerful, the laws governing municipal authority are a maze of restrictions.

In many states, a municipality may not set up a utility to compete with an established private utility except after receiving a certificate of convenience and necessity from a state commission. Commissions typically issue such certificates only if the municipality can show that existing service is inadequate or otherwise deficient. California and Illinois are notable exceptions to this practice. In Wisconsin, there has been a long and as-yet-unsuccessful campaign to permit municipal utilities to extend their lines without state permission. Legislative control of public utility territories has tended to keep them small, preventing any economies of scale and protecting neighboring IOUs from rate competition. Elsewhere, the most widespread legislative tactic is severe limitations on municipal bonding. These limitations include a low public debt limit for general obligation bonds and a requirement that the state approve the issuance of revenue bonds. Virtually all of these restrictions grew out of the IOUs' efforts.

Since the 1920s, private utilities have been lobbying to end government tax-exempt bonding entirely in the hopes of shutting off lower-interest money for public systems. The Public Ownership League of America fought virtually

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PG&E's Scott Dam, Northern California

the same proposed legislation in 1922 that the American Public Power Association opposes today, this time in a form put forward by the late Nixon Administration. The Nixon tax proposal would substitute a system of government interest subsidies for tax-exempt bonding. This would give the federal government de facto veto power over specific projects.

Tax-exempt bonds, of course, are hardly an equitable tax policy. They provide a convenient repository for corporate and individual wealth that can generate interest without incurring federal taxation. But while the policy exists, communities and utility districts should be able to make use of the bonds for the widest possible development. Municipal bonding that finances public power facilities is one of the few instances of public benefit in a sea of private benefits supported by the tax laws.

The most direct and effective method of private utility attack is still the takeover move. It is usually coordinated with support from a regional utility association. *Public Power* magazine reported such takeover campaigns in the upper Midwest, throughout Ohio, and in Virginia during the period from March to August 1970. The magazine also revealed an Edison Electric Institute document establishing the policy. A typical campaign involves an attempt to influence the city council, construction of a "citizens' group," and large media expenditures. The particulars, catalogued year after year by the APPA magazine, are distinguished only by the IOUs' willingness to use whatever will work. Red-baiting is employed if the community is receptive to it, keying on such slogans as "socializing America." The takeover campaigns don't always succeed, but the IOUs are patient. They continue to erode the number of public power cities.

On the other side, fighting intermittent but deadly skirmishes with the private utilities, are the more than 2,800 municipal, state, district, federal, and cooperative power systems. Many of these systems are members of either the American Public Power Association or the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association. Although both organizations lobby from headquarters in Washington, neither has taken an aggressive role in promoting public power. Public power systems in general tend to be cautious and unwilling to take stands that might be unpopular with industry.

For example, the crush of energy-intensive industries such as aluminum and atomic fuel production in the Tennessee Valley has forced TVA away from its original hydroelectric power network. Once a paragon of concern for the public interest, TVA is now the largest single purchaser of strip-mined coal in the world. The coal fires the boilers of steam power plants that are now necessary to satisfy a huge industrial, military, and Atomic Energy Commission demand.

Public power agencies in the Southwest exhibit similarly narrow practices. Despite their usual responsiveness to local environmental concern in plant construction and air pollution standards, many public systems have joined in the Western Energy Supply and Transmission consortium to augment their power capacity. This group of 23 private and public utilities is building a power grid of six massive coal-fired plants in the desert of the Colorado Plateau. Several of the plants use strip-mined coal from leases on Navajo and Hopi land. The Four Corners plant, the first built and the largest to date in the system, is the greatest industrial polluter in the country.

In their defense, public power systems are bound by the present limits of energy production technology. They have not been the most strident promoters of coal-fired or

Photo by Howard Petrick

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nuclear plants. The difficult decisions of rate structure, load growth, boiler fuel, and environmental standards are relevant to all electric utilities. Consideration of public opinion and response to local customers are still higher among the publicly owned systems than among the IOUs.

[THE BIG PUSH]

Despite the obvious difficulties of building publicly-owned and -controlled industries in the U.S. economy, the public power movement has two things going for it: a history of practical success, and a wave of public resentment against private energy corporations. Coalitions of new populists, consumer groups, community control organizations, urban planners, and liberal politicians are joining together in many communities to seek alternatives to private energy exploitation. The existing public power systems don't quite know what to make of this new attention. But they have often assisted consumer groups with the technical and legal problems involved in municipal power feasibility studies and condemnation proceedings. Many general managers of public systems have weathered criticism from the business community for years, and are not eager to be smeared for advocating public ownership. But others are overjoyed at the prospect of renewed public support, which has largely been lacking since the late 1930s.

On the national and state levels, public demands for control of the giant energy corporations have led to Senate proposals for a federal oil and gas corporation. (See "What the country needs is . . . ," RAMPARTS, May 1974.) There are proposals for state energy corporations as well. The TVA-modeled state corporations would develop oil, natural gas, coal, geothermal, nuclear, and hydro resources on public lands, competing with private industry in the market. The scale of the public enterprises could be massive: 50 percent of U.S. oil and gas reserves, 40 percent of coal and uranium, 80 percent of oil shale, and 60 percent of geothermal resources lie under public lands. Distribution of energy could remain local, retailed by public and cooperative utilities and gasoline stations.

An initiative for this kind of energy development and wholesale power corporation in Maine narrowly failed in the November 1973 election. The new governor of Vermont, Thomas Salmon, has directed the legislature to draft proposals for state energy development, graduated rate structures, and minimal "lifeline" energy service for all state residents regardless of ability to pay. The impetus for his action came from a Nader-supported research group, some unions, low-income and senior-citizen associations, and the Welfare Rights Organization.

The broad issue of community ownership and control has fostered local coalitions in many states. The Georgia Power Project in Atlanta has begun organizing around utility rate increases, making alliances with the Atlanta Labor Council, the Welfare Rights Organization, and the Tenants Council. Through its intervention with the state public service commission, the coalition gained a platform for attacking a variety of corrupt practices of the Georgia Power Company, and for presenting alternative rate and power distribution plans.

In San Francisco, the push for public power has been led by the *San Francisco Bay Guardian* and a group called Power to the People. Municipal ownership of PG&E's facilities in the city has been an issue since 1912 when the Raker Act mandated public power as a trade-off for federal construction of the Hetch Hetchy water and power complex in Yosemite park. Through the years, PG&E has defeated eight separate attempts to issue municipal bonds for the system. The company bilks San Francisco out of $30 million a year by re-routing Hetch Hetchy public power over its lines, then selling privately generated electricity to the city. In December 1973, a San Francisco grand jury issued a report to the Superior Court finding that PG&E was distributing electricity illegally in the city. Although the state public utilities commission promises to reply in defense of the present arrangement, the report has given new life and added leverage to public power groups.

E&GP (Electricity and Gas for the People—Turn PG&E Around) has coordinated demands in the San Francisco Bay Area for lower utility rates and an end to virtually automatic PG&E profit and rate increases. Seeking to focus public anger at higher utility bills that parallel higher corporate profits, E&GP concentrates its attack directly on the private utility. Meanwhile, members of E&GP, Power to the People, and RIOT have revived the move for municipalization in both San Francisco and Berkeley. And this time they are armed with recently enacted campaign spending limitation ordinances to curtail massive PG&E corporate intrusion.

The benefits of a new public power movement, in the spirit of the radical populists who began municipal systems in the 1880s, would be both real and symbolic. First, public power works, and its electricity costs less. Second, municipal power systems prove that public enterprises can be efficient and profitable for the public, even within the present economy. They give the lie to the alleged superiority of private corporate organization. Moreover, public systems established during the current mood of disgust with energy monopolies would be expressions of community power and proof of the vulnerability of the corporate giants. Despite the difficulties of condemnation proceedings, over 30 public power systems have been formed since 1960. And this May, the people in the upstate New York town of Massena voted overwhelmingly for a $5 million bond issue to buy back their electric system.

By itself, public power isn't likely to transform America. It is not a widespread concern now, and because of the technical questions involved and the complications of power system condemnation proceedings, it is not likely to become one soon. But it is a concrete, workable example of community control and public ownership that can be an important adjunct to wider political programs. It's a beginning step toward revitalizing public energy as an alternative to continued corporate abuse.

Thomas Brom, a consultant for the Community Ownership Organizing Project in Oakland, Calif., has written for the Nation. *Edward Kirshner is an urban and economic planner, also associated with the Project. A version of this article appeared in Working Papers for a New Society, Summer 1974.*

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The Politics of Common Cause

An Indelicate Balance

When John Gardner, the chairman of Common Cause, is asked to explain the success his citizens' organization has had in enlisting members during the past four years, he is apt to respond with a curiously crude analogy. The typical member, he explains, rallies to the Cause like one who has been burned in a crooked gambling hall.

"He reminds me," says Gardner, "of the guy who goes into the gambling joint on Saturday night, blows his money on a fixed roulette game, curses the owner, and storms out into the night. The next Saturday night he is back. He blows his money again on that same fixed wheel, curses the owner, and storms out. Now, sooner or later you know that guy is going to wise up, and he is going to say to himself, 'I'm going to go in there and tear the wires out of that crooked wheel.' "

It may seem imprecise to characterize the well-educated, well-tailored ladies and gentlemen of Common Cause as fugitives from a roulette den. But the analogy is not so far-fetched. Most of those who joined up with Gardner to make government "accountable"—his favorite word—did so after experiencing the fixed wheels in a variety of political games. They came from the peace movement, the environmental crusades, countless good-government leagues, and from both Democratic and Republican party campaigns. Their experiences taught them that the wheels were fixed, that the cozy relationships of normal politics can blunt the most ardently pressed reforms. It is all very well to espouse a redistribution of wealth and to formulate immaculate schemes for tax reform. But it takes someone who has been burned a couple of times to know about the fixed wheel that is the House of Representatives Ways and Means Committee.

It is as a collection of frustrated citizens, then, that Common Cause has become not only an influential citizens' lobby but, by customary measures, the healthiest national political organization in the country. Its dues-paying membership stands at nearly 350,000 at a time when the two major parties are losing adherents by the thousands. (Republicans last year counted fewer than 200,000 regular contributors and the Democrats have abandoned an elaborate plan for attracting constant donors.) It has muscled its way to prominence in Washington as the most effective lobby on campaign finance reform. Congressional leaders who once smiled patronizingly at what seemed simply more good-government types pay their respects now. The ultimate accolade, perhaps, was the fury of Rep. Wayne Hays who, in the midst of the campaign money battle, took the floor of the House to denounce Gardner as a "common crook."

Illustrations by Howard Saunders

by William Chapman

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Nonetheless, Common Cause remains something of a mystery in the traditionally cynical city of Washington. How could a movement of do-gooders with no previous experience in national affairs rise to such prominence? Other citizens' lobbies appear on the scene, flourish for a few months, and quietly fade into oblivion. What makes Common Cause different? What is it that entices a man or woman to pour $15 a year into a virtually unknown quantity merely for the privilege of being counted a member and, perhaps, being allowed the dubious honor of trying to pressure a local congressman—if he will actually come to the telephone.

Part of the answer lies on a bar graph that decorates one wall of John Gardner's unpretentious office on M Street in downtown Washington. The graph records the rise and fall of Common Cause's membership over the last four years. One part of it covers the period of 1970-1972, when Common Cause was deeply engaged in the last stage of the lobbying effort to end the U.S. engagement in Southeast Asia. It was a period when Congress at long last was preparing to legislate an end to financial support for the war. We had passed that naive stage when people thought that waves of students by themselves would transform an indifferent Congress into cutting off funds. It was a time for serious, steady lobbying as well. "They were effective on the war when no one else outside Congress was being effective," says one veteran of that period whose admiration for Common Cause is distinctly limited. "I have to admit that they kept the pressure on." Gardner's bar graph, accordingly, showed that in this period membership rose from zero to more than 200,000.

By late 1972, however, with the anti-war fervor cooled and political energies being sapped in the presidential campaign, the membership began to slump. The smart people in Washington were beginning to say that Common Cause was a one-issue cause. What did Gardner have left in his sling? He had been preaching from the very start that the mission of Common Cause was "accountability." What did that mean? Gene McCarthy had talked about that throughout the primaries in 1968. So what? Gardner kept talking about the twin evils of American politics: secrecy and money, deplored by reformers since the beginning of the republic.

And then came Watergate.

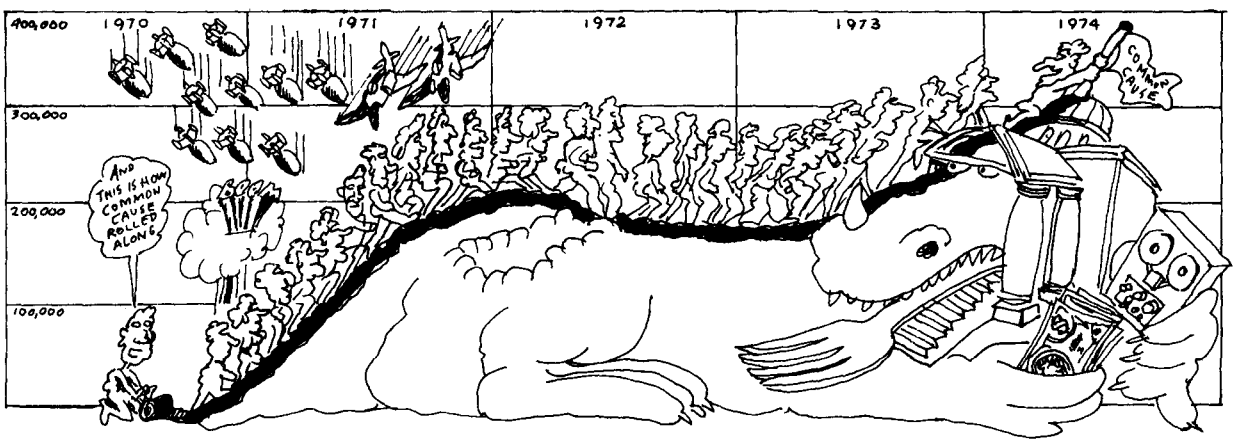
It can be argued that the man who made Common Cause was not John Gardner, but rather Maurice Stans. He embodied the sinister principles of politics-as-usual that Common Cause had fought against since its founding. Secrecy. Money. As chairman of the Finance Committee to Re-elect the President, Stans had presided with lofty indifference over the collection of a huge amount—at least $20 million, we now know—of campaign funds, all of it solicited and collected before the new campaign finance reporting law went into effect in April 1972. Much of it came in illegal corporate contributions. None of it was clearly accounted for. Common Cause filed the suit that opened up the sources of secret money. Common Cause became the major lobby on the Hill in behalf of a new campaign spending law.

Suddenly, the twin issues that Gardner had challenged from the beginning came to life and the bar graph on his office wall began rising again. Money began pouring in as the Common Cause membership soared, over a period of 18 months, to 350,000. By mid-1974, his organization was able to employ seven full-time lobbyists on Capitol Hill and wage a publicity campaign that was spectacular by any politician's standards. Shrewdly, Gardner went after Democrats too. "There's another scandal in Washington," declared an advertisement in major newspapers, when Democratic fund raisers held one of those Washington dinners aimed at affluent lobbyists who regularly bestow money on both parties with cynical bipartisanship.

[THE PATRICIAN REFORMERS]

It would be easy to measure Common Cause in terms of Watergate and picture it as just a temporary phenomenon luckily locked onto the contemporary comets of our political life. I suspect its success runs somewhat deeper than that. Common Cause has tapped another vein in our political history, a narrow vein perhaps, but one that runs back at least a century. For lack of a more descriptive phrase, let us call it Mugwumpism.

The Mugwumps enjoyed a brief prominence as the patrician reformers of the 1870s and their similarities with the people of Common Cause are striking. They flourished in era of vast corruption—of the Grant Administration scandals and Crédit Mobilier. They, too, rode a tide of disgust against the existing political parties. Like Common Cause, they were self-described purifiers of the system, devoted to cleansing the civil service and throwing out the spoilsmen and grafters. They, too, saw political reform as a matter of tinkering, remolding the "instruments of self-government," to draw on another of Gardner's favorite phrases. And,



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"Common Cause may succeed marvelously at what it wants to do, but what it wants to do may not be all that important. Opening up the system to public view is worthwhile, but unfortunately history records the limits of such tactics."

most important, the Mugwumps were drawn from the local elites of their time, citizen politicians disgusted with the deceit and bald dishonesty of their conventional politicians. The preeminence of secret money and secret caucuses appalled them every bit as much as they disturb their modern counterparts in Common Cause. The following is an excerpt from one of John Gardner's membership letters:

> *No matter who is elected your next Senator or Representative—no matter which ticket these people run on or how well-meaning and noble their intentions—they are in danger of becoming prisoners of a system dominated by money and secrecy.*

It might as well have come from the pen of Carl Schurz or Horace Greeley, the preeminent Mugwumps of a century ago.

Above all, the comparison is valid when one considers the resemblance between the patricians of the 1870s and the Mugwumps of the 1970s. Common Causers are, by and large, well-educated and upper middle class. I once circulated questionnaires among the 40 board members and received replies from 23 of them. Thirteen of them reported family incomes of more than $25,000 and the others ranked between $15,000 and $25,000. Fifteen of them held post-graduate degrees.

They came predominantly from the bureaucratic and educational elites of our time. Gardner himself sets the pace—former president of the Carnegie Foundation, former secretary of Health, Education and Welfare, former leader of the Urban Coalition. His colleagues were from the same top slice of America: California industrialist Martin Stone, Chicago investment banker Martin J. Koldyke, former HEW Secretary Wilbur J. Cohen, Howard University President James Cheek, former United Auto Workers executive Jack Conway (now the Common Cause president).

Gardner is the cool patrician, ruling gently but firmly over assistants who arrived at Common Cause from the tough worlds of Washington lobbying and legislative infighting. Several have labor union backgrounds. Jack Conway, the president, was for 15 years the top aide and alter ego of United Auto Workers President Walter Reuther and once headed the AFL-CIO's Industrial Union Department. Cohen got into lobbying Congress first as a representative of Conway's department and, for a time, of Americans for Democratic Action. Fred Wertheimer, the vice-president who directed the highly successful campaign money monitoring operation, came up through Republican congressional ranks, starting out as minority counsel to the House Small Business Committee. The common denominator is experience at the level of congressional politics where the deals are made, where votes are accumulated one by one.

A sampling of their local leaders turns up the same pattern. They are of that curious part of our time, the affluent activists. The typical local chairman is apt to be the wife of a department store owner or banker who has devoted her life to League of Women Voters politics. She is probably a veteran of half a dozen crusades which have hardened her to the realities of politics and compelled her to discover just where—in Gardner's analogy—the wires of the fixed roulette wheel are located. Very likely, she worked faithfully in one of the two parties for McCarthy or McGovern or even Nixon. She has now become skeptical of the established parties—not because they are corrupt but because they are lifeless and irrelevant. Disinterest in conventional electoral politics and the parties is a common trait. Gardner recently tried to summon up a recollection of a typical Common Cause member and he hit upon a small-town newspaper publisher who had once told him: "Once you decided to sue *both* the Democrats *and* the Republicans [over campaign funds] I knew you were the organization for me."

Some see this as a narrow base of organization and complain that there is no room in Common Cause for the less comfortable, for the poor and the blacks. A couple of years ago, Gerald Elkan of Raleigh, North Carolina, came to a Common Cause board meeting and outspokenly protested what he saw at national headquarters. "We all seem to be the same kind of people," he said. "You must get our names from the same lists—from [the subscribers of] *The New Republic* and *The Progressive.* It's all the same kind of middle-class, liberal do-gooders—just like I am. . . . We have one group of people we are talking to."

A black member, Howard Clements, registered a similar complaint: "Common Cause is a white, middle-class organization. It has a lack of sensitivity to black people. I looked around [the Washington headquarters] when I came in and the only black people I saw were behind typewriters. I can't go back and tell my brothers and sisters to join Common Cause. They say, 'For what?' It just looks to us as if Common Cause is a whites folks' organization."

Gardner and his colleagues are sensitive to the elitist charge, aware that it collides in midair with their claim to be a broadly based citizens' lobby. The collision is perhaps inevitable. An organization concerned with fighting political corruption or opening up the doors of congressional committee meetings perhaps has little to offer people caught in a welfare trap or struggling to organize a Southern textile mill. Recalling the 1870s again, it is worth listening to what historian Richard Hofstadter wrote about the Mugwumps of that time:

> *Single-minded concern for honesty in public service is a luxury of the middle and upper classes. The masses do not care deeply about the honesty of public servants unless it promises to lead to some human fruition, some measurable easing of the difficulties of life. If a choice is necessary, the populace of an American city will choose*

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kindness over honesty, as the nation's enduring Tammanys attest.

The elitist criticism of Common Cause is somewhat overdone. For what it has set out to do within its limited self-definition, Common Cause can use the sophisticated, the experienced, the self-assured, the skilled. If it is to begin to open up the power relationships in Washington and the state capitals, it needs the people who understand those relationships and who have the capacity for pressuring those who can change them. It needs, simply, people who have access to power.

[THE LOBBY NETWORK]

There is no difficulty in comprehending the people who make Common Cause work—or in demonstrating how they work. Once all the rhetoric is stripped away, it is old-fashioned, pressure-group politics. The tactics are simple enough. A corps of experienced lobbyists plies the congressional offices daily, explaining, persuading, cajoling. When an important issue is near a critical point, the membership is mobilized to bring that extra, precise pressure to bear. A volunteer squad has taken on the tedious chore of monitoring almost every House committee to see that they live up to their new pledge of holding open sessions. When the most recalcitrant, Ways and Means, attempted recently to shut its doors for a particularly sensitive session, Common Cause promptly arranged to have pressures brought from the home districts of 25 committee members. Ways and Means opened its doors that day.

Common Cause uses a dual strategy known as "inside lobbying" and "outside lobbying." Inside lobbying is the traditional method—pacing the corridors, explaining floor tactics, asking for votes and trying to figure out what legislative chemistry will produce them. Outside lobbying is a highly refined version of the tactics employed previously only by the largest business and labor pressure groups. It means arranging for local Common Cause affiliates to put the heat on their congressmen at the crucial time. When a vote nears, lobbyists on the Hill pick out those who are uncommitted and feed those names back to their congressional districts. The locals generate a barrage of pressures—telephone calls to the congressmen, letters to the editor, statements by hastily organized coalitions of prominent citizens. It is designed to create the impression that Congressman X's district is, overnight, swept with a burning fervor to open committee meetings or limit campaign spending. The ultimate grand scheme envisions permanent volunteer lobby groups in all 435 congressional districts. So far there are about 200.

In theory, the local Common Cause affiliates are autonomous and free to work out their individual programs for assaulting state legislatures, city councils, and administrative bodies. In practice, the national Common Cause apparatus attempts to direct those campaigns along lines it lays down. It insists, for example, that the locals adhere generally to its "issues agenda"—anti-secrecy legislation, lobbyist disclosure, campaign reform—and avoid entanglements in other areas. It insists, in effect, that Common Cause should stick to those procedural issues in which it has developed legislative expertise and stay away from substantive issues such as environmental protection and consumer agitation.

So far there have been no serious clashes, but a potential struggle between Washington control and local option seems likely. Already there has been one dispute. The Delaware Common Cause wanted to join the environmentalists' fight to block location of a supertanker and refinery installation that threatened to ruin the state's coastline. The national Common Cause laid down this injunction: You can lobby to protect the *procedures* of the state's coastal zoning law that assures open meetings and public hearings, but don't get involved in the *substantive* issue of whether or not the installation is acceptable. A direct clash was averted when the Delaware Common Cause agreed to national's ground rules. If it had not, according to one national official, the technical assistance from Washington headquarters could have been cut off.

[LOOKING AT THE RECORD]

But judging Common Cause's overall performance is a trickier task. Measuring its clout, balancing its wins and losses, becomes almost impossible when one tries to track it through the legislative process. There is no doubt that Common Cause's message is heard. One Republican congressman, relatively high up in his party's hierarchy, acknowledges, "There's no question that we hear from their people back home. It's not a flood tide, but the mail and the calls do come in from some of the more thoughtful opinion makers. It's not the kind of stuff that comes from people who just sit down one day and rip off a letter to their congressman and then you don't hear any more from them."

Unquestionably, Common Cause—with a big assist from Maury Stans and Watergate—created the climate in which a serious campaign finance reform bill could be passed. It was no newcomer to that fight. It had worked for a disclosure law in 1970, when no one took the issue seriously and when everyone knew the legislation would be vetoed by President Nixon. That was essential to what Common Cause lobbyist David Cohen regards as his organization's most important role—"putting an issue on the agenda." Monitoring the new law that finally went into effect in April 1972 was another step, because it focused national attention in an organized way on the big-money contributors. And when the Common Cause lawsuit forced disclosure of Stans's biggest secret givers, the pressures became overwhelming and the stage was set for legislation finally to be enacted this year. Even Watergate would not have dislodged and sent rolling a bill so devoutly unwanted by big pressure groups and their beneficiaries in Congress. Only persistent lobbying would work, and that came almost exclusively from Common Cause.

The results of its other congressional battles are more obscure. Certainly Common Cause was instrumental in opening up committee meetings in the House and it is performing the dull, monotonous task of monitoring those meetings to make sure committee chairmen do not return to more comfortable secrecy. It played an important role in generating commitments to the House reform plan spon-

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sored by Representative Richard Bolling. That plan, an open assault on the power of committee chairmen, almost died from lack of attention during the last months of Watergate and might have slipped totally into oblivion without Common Cause lobbying, Congressman Bolling believes. But as with other issues which it claims credit for developing, Common Cause was merely abetting a campaign that had already picked up considerable steam. And in the Senate, the efforts of Common Cause have been totally unsuccessful.

Some who have lobbied for reforms alongside Common Cause object to its incessant self-puffery, its habit of claiming credit for slaying dragons when it may only have helped sharpen the lance. "They were a latter-day recruit to congressional reform," insists one veteran Hill lobbyist who tried to enlist Gardner's aid and support as early as 1970. "They finally jumped into the pool along with the rest of us and now they are saying that they invented the pool and all of the dives and everything else. They have tried to claim that they helped push through the record teller reform [i.e., public recording of members' votes] when they weren't in it at all. That's very aggravating. They were great on the war and it was their type of continuing presence that made the whole campaign finance thing possible. But they have this greedy way of taking credit for almost everything that's done."

It may be that Common Cause's most effective work has been not in the halls of Congress but in the state capitals across the country. In the past two years waves of protest and reform have swept into these most dusty corners of American politics, and in many cases the waves were generated by local affiliates of Common Cause. There are new laws on the books which open up legislative meetings and require extensive and timely reporting of campaign contributions, public disclosure of officials' finances, and regulation of lobbyists. The Associated Press recently calculated that as many as 25 states have passed some form of political purification statutes, many of them designed along the lines of Common Cause's model statutes and many pushed through by persistent Common Cause lobbyists.

In California, Common Cause played a leading role along with the People's Lobby in the struggle for Proposition 9, a comprehensive initiative to restrict campaign spending and lobbying. Citizen activists in Texas, responding to the public disgust with the Sharpestown bank scandal, forced through laws requiring open meetings, disclosures of lobbying activities, and greater availability of public records. At least 23 other states from Florida to Wyoming enacted campaign finance limitations and disclosures legislation. In some instances, Common Cause was the dominant pressure group; in others it merely assisted.

[FORM OR SUBSTANCE?]

This almost single-minded concentration on procedural reforms—on "opening up the system"—is both baffling to other liberals and disconcerting to some of its own members. Common Cause has yet to take the lead on any major substantive issues of social reform, such as welfare or taxes or civil rights. There have been occasional forays into the environmental battlegrounds, but Gardner's continuing emphasis is on reforming the procedures, or resharpening the instruments of self-government, as he likes to put it.

That these targets may be too narrowly circumscribed is a distinct cause of concern, even in Gardner's hierarchy. "I feel strongly that we can't just make procedures our own parochial issue," says Cohen, the able chief lobbyist in Washington. "But procedures had to come first. The real problem in any serious reform, social or political, is to demystify the tribal rites of the legislative body. To do that you have to tie those things to the issues that people feel strongly about and those are money and secrecy."

Common Cause's limited role in the impeachment proceedings against President Nixon was a source of complaints among those who want the organization to strike out into new arenas. It kept largely to the sidelines, arguing primarily on behalf of keeping the House Judiciary Committee's proceedings open to the public. (It failed to move Chairman Peter W. Rodino.) To some it seemed like playing for small stakes when the biggest political game in recent times was under way. But not one of Gardner's board members objected.

One member who has worked diligently on Common Cause projects believes, however, that Gardner's organization is now facing a crucial do-or-die decision about the future. With Watergate behind us, she thinks, the issue of "accountability" is dead. Money and secrecy will recede as principal topics now that Nixon is gone and his top aides are moving into jail. Common Cause cannot survive a honeymoon with a new President who seems honest and candid, she predicts. "It's got to go after something new—like tax reform, maybe, but that's going to be tough because a lot of them [Common Cause members] live on their coupons. So what's next?"

Gardner does not see it quite that way. For one thing, he does not concede that procedural and substantive reforms are so sharply separated. And he believes fiercely that there

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can be no genuine social reform unless the political roadblocks are first cleared away, unless someone rips out the wires on the fixed roulette wheels. He *is* appalled at the unequal distribution of wealth in this country and has proposed legislation that would ease the burden of the excessive social security payroll tax on middle- and low-income families. But there will be no serious change, he argues, until people understand how the committees of Congress can block tax reform legislation.

"Tax reformers go back and forth across this land talking about the redistribution of wealth," he observes with a characteristic tone of exasperation. "But they never mention how the Ways and Means Committee functions or that cozy relationship between Mills and Long, and how the process will be fixed. As long as the House can use a closed rule, as long as the Ways and Means Committee meets in deepest secrecy, you are not going to have tax reform."

Few other men could talk seriously of building and sustaining a national organization devoted to remote—although important—issues such as lobbying control and open committee meetings. It once was easy to rally Americans to the causes of civil rights and ending the war; but now, in the current mood of apathy and indifference, it is tempting to write off Common Cause as a temporary fluke. But Gardner has some genuine successes. He seems to have connected in a limited way with something deeper than a Mugwump's taste for honesty and openness: that vein of alienation and disconnectedness that is so prominent a feature of contemporary politics.

Gardner understands this void perhaps better than any active politician. "It's just something that seems built into our contemporary life," he observes. "You feel increasingly separated from our institutions. People feel they lack access and it bothers them. They lack a voice. But until we came along, no one had tackled the issues of *why* they can't be heard. We are tapping this feeling of separation, of being discounted."

In that context, the parts of Common Cause become less important than the whole. The successful assaults on illicit money and legislative secrecy are satisfying, but the mere fact of involvement in those assaults is what keeps them going. Gardner's membership tastes something intoxicating when it moves a congressman or a senator around, badgers a legislature into regulating lobbyists, forces a committee to open its doors. It is not simply a crude lust for power. It is the feeling of being connected, finally, to something that produces tangible results.

One of Gardner's colleagues was asked recently how an organization with such an ambiguous record of wins and losses could sustain itself. He agreed with the judgment that the record is ambiguous. A veteran of many conventional campaigns, he had often wondered, too, when the letup would occur, when the selfless devotion to monotonous tasks would waver and fade.

"But you've got to realize something else—that it doesn't matter all that much to our members whether we win or lose," he said. "It doesn't matter that we don't always slay the dragon. What's important is that we tell them what the dragon looks like and what awful things it does and then we just have to point the lance. We don't really have to slay him."

Yet there still remains a larger issue of whether a national organization can sustain itself on procedural issues alone and whether, in fact, changing procedures really changes anything very important. It is no doubt worthy to have the names of lobbyists disclosed, along with the amount of money they spend to buy votes in a state legislature. But will that in fact prevent votes from being bought?

The whole momentum of Common Cause has been channeled to open up the systems of government and politics to expose how the powerful special interests influence them. That is of course a noble goal. But it is merely wistful to think that this would end or even seriously limit the ability of those interests to manipulate the lawmakers and administrators. Their ways, even now, are not all that mysterious. Any knowledgeable person in Washington can find out in ten minutes who has been given a high position in the Department of Housing and Urban Development because he is friendly to the real estate lobby. Being able to watch the House Agriculture Committee at work will not disarrange that constellation of farming interests which thrives on high subsidies. One Washington reporter who has followed the House Ways and Means Committee in both open and closed sessions observed recently that since those meetings were forced open the only people who came to watch were the business and labor lobbyists who had, of course, always known what was going on.

And so we come to the ultimate conundrum of Common Cause: it may succeed marvelously at what it wants to do, but what it wants to do may not be all that important.

It is unfair to fault Gardner for adhering to those issues which deal with procedures of politics. Opening up the system to public view is worthwhile—just as, historically, abandoning "King Caucus" for opened conventions was worthwhile and substituting direct primaries for conventions was worthwhile.

But history records primarily the limits of such tactics. It has always been the dream of middle-class reformers that purifying the procedures was merely the preliminary to real change, and their failures stretch from the Mugwumps to the open politics formulas of Gene McCarthy. The Mugwumps wanted to bust up those secret deals which produced the tariff; they challenged the secret mechanisms only to enter upon the period of highest tariffs. McCarthy first proposed the idea of an off-year national party convention that could deal with substantive issues; his party now is headed toward a December mini-convention that intends to avoid all serious issues.

Perhaps most disturbing of all is the realization that at this stage in our history we still need an organization like Common Cause. It is disturbing to think that on the eve of our Bicentennial, aroused citizens are forced to demand that committees of Congress be opened to the public or that politicians be forced to disclose their sources of financial support. These seem to be such elementary expectations, such minimal demands. This may be the real measure of our impatience with Common Cause—that it is around now to settle those accounts we thought were settled long ago.

William Chapman is a reporter for the Washington Post.

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Ford and the Media:

CBS Declares a Honeymoon

It is Monday, August 12. President Ford has just given his "inaugural" address to his friends in Congress, and I have just turned off my television set after watching it steadily these past three days. Such a marathon is not unusual for me, although usually I am watching what my intellectual friends consider some of the more barren acreage in the vast wasteland: *Kung Fu, The Mary Tyler Moore Show,* and even Saturday morning's *Superfriends,* which I watch primarily out of camaraderie with my son Andrew, but also because I enjoy seeing people do things well.

Approached as transient pleasure, a sort of cerebral massage, or even (at those times when you are pushed by Matthew Arnold-types to justify such apparently worthless activity) a source of great insight into pop culture, television rarely lets you down. There are some shows so stupid (*Chase* comes to mind) or so deluded (*Police Story,* for instance) and some performers so gross (Dean Martin, Merv Griffin) that I watch them only out of solemn dedication to the medium. But television annoys me not nearly as much when it fails to entertain as when it tries to *edify.* I know, for instance, that news coverage is supposed to be television's finest hour, yet while I have adapted to a nightly half hour with the Cronkite team over the years, coverage of special events almost always leaves me with that animosity wiser minds ventilate by getting a shotgun and blowing the picture tube into microscopic particles.

It is in its coverage of these democratic rituals—ranging on the spectrum of ceremony between an assassination and a moonshot—that the ideology always lurking in the background of television not only becomes obvious, but oppressive. Escaped from the confines of the half hour format it runs riot. Nor is it, as Patrick Buchanan and other of the President's men have charged, simply the ideology of the liberal program. If so (and assuming that there *was* such a thing as a liberal program), it could be dealt with. It is in fact something more sinister, as this past weekend has shown once again: a dangerously sentimental attitude toward American politics and politicians; an epic self-righteousness; a view of the workings of government more appropriate to an 11th grade civics text edited by George F. Babbitt around 1925 than to a nation so recently extricated from homocide in Southeast Asia and (quite accidentally, as it worked out) having just managed to get rid of the most treacherous and repressive administration in its history.

Overstatements, you say? Perhaps. (The experience of the past decade is that equal time provisions are applied to radical viewpoints only when they achieve a marketable excess.) If you feel that television news must be em-

by Peter Collier

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braced for the worthy role it played in the administration's fall, don't forget that a few years earlier, before they were subjected to Nixon's kamikaze attack, all the networks were faithfully reporting such inflated body counts in Vietnam that they would have totaled up to the population of most of the subcontinent if ever added together; they were zestfully showing Pentagon-inspired reports of successful seek-and-destroy missions and the happy hamlets of the Mekong Delta; they were giving Eric Sevareid and others free rein to prospect for the light at the end of the tunnel in evening commentaries.

Perhaps they have learned something since the days of My Lai. Perhaps attacks against them from the oval office, combined with the fact that investigative journalism is now de rigueur, have promoted a new spirit of self-scrutiny. But you couldn't prove it by this past weekend.

With nothing much to look forward to after the last piece of wilted analysis following Ford's speech (Monday being a notoriously thin viewing night even during the regular season), I decided to take former FCC Commissioner Nicholas Johnson's advice and talk back to my television set, recalling remarks made by the CBS news team over the past few days and engaging them in a brief dialog.

* * *

Dan Rather: "[In this speech] he gave to this moment a touch of class; more than that, a touch of majesty touching that nerve in most people that says to their brain: we revere the Presidency, we respect the President; the republic and the country come first."

Let me interject something here, if I might, Dan. You're probably our expert on Nixon, having had a good many sharp exchanges with him since that time you were allowed the unique honor of a one-on-one interview. I remember especially that moment a few months back at the newspaper publishers' convention. Nothing short of electrifying, you standing there trading barbs with the President of the United States.

I suppose it is natural that you should look at the man now, greatly diminished since the height of his defiance (the face muscles rippling involuntarily like a horse's flank and paranoia hooding his eyes in cataracts), and feel a little guilty. I'm not sure you should feel bad, but even if you do, you shouldn't try to atone for some wrong against Nixon by belatedly seeing a previously undiscovered greatness of heart in him, or a final concern for the commonweal. Give the devil his due.

In point of fact, this reporter (a circumspect way of saying "I" which I borrow from our colleague Eric Sevareid) saw the speech as totally unregenerate, the last of a long series of aggressions. What he was saying (and I could almost hear it in that unexorcized voice that appears in the tape transcripts) was clear: "All right, you assholes, I'm leaving now. You know why? Because a bunch of pricks I trusted—St. Clair, Haig, and all my Republican bug-out 'friends' in the House—turned on me at the last minute, lost their nerve, cut and ran. If they hadn't I'd have been here until they carried me out feet first, and even then you'd have heard my fingernails scrabbling on the woodwork and wallpaper. If you think I'm going to admit anything here, you've got another think coming. I am the President. However they remember me, the people will remember all of you who ganged up on me—members of the press take note—as turncoats and bullies. This isn't over yet. So (expletive deleted) all of you."

That's not as fanciful an interpretation as you think, Dan. The speech was neither statecraft nor conciliation, but the middle finger jabbed in the face of the nation. Leaving office with a kind of curse for what and who comes after. There is a scar there now which wasn't there before, and Nixon applied no salve to it. It was an effective speech, though, I'll grant that. It allowed him to do damage and gain forgiveness at the same time. Did you notice that in his press conference right after the speech, Governor Reagan was asked if he thought Nixon should be prosecuted. When he answered, "The man has suffered enough," not a single person in the briefing room, and it was sweating with journalists, got up to pursue that further or to say, *"Enough?* You must be joking!" I guess Nixon feels he has us of the fourth estate in a kind of corner because we stood by passively and allowed Kissinger to create the image of The Great World Leader whose untiring efforts brought a generation of peace to the world. Even in some of our comments here tonight we've referred a little carelessly to the fact that history may "judge him on the strength of his foreign affairs." Well, if so, then history (as Dickens said of the law) "is a ass."

* * *

Eric Sevareid: "At any rate, the long agony is over now, the nightmare ended. Washington has breathed a collective sigh of relief. Now perhaps we can get back to the business at hand."

I should begin by admitting that you are my least favorite newsman, Eric. Dan has a boyish sincerity. Roger Mudd seems the most intelligent. And Walter, well he has qualities that are amazing—the ability to indicate an avuncular amusement by slightly raising one shaggy eyebrow, or a grandfatherly dismay by microscopically pursing the corner of his mouth. It is the light touch, and you, if I may be so bold, would do well to cultivate it. I know you're supposed to be the *intellectual* on the show and that you're striving for *gravitas,* that old Roman virtue of weightiness of judgment. Yet in you it seems mainly fatuous. I know your mournful countenance is supposed to be that of one brooding over the fate of the republic, but it brings to my mind those commercials about middle-aged sufferers of irregularity.

You are the ideologue of the news, I guess it is fair to say, one of those Cold War liberals whose clock stopped around the time of the Marshall Plan. I don't mean to dismiss you as antique. It's not that. It's just that you keep talking in terms that don't apply anymore. This is why you are increasingly reduced to a *posture*—quoting Yeats on the question of the center's inability to hold, issuing nightly jeremiads against extremists of all hues while merchandising tolerance for followers of the middle ground.

(If I seem ungenerous you must remember that types lend themselves to ridicule; and I have, bear in mind, sat

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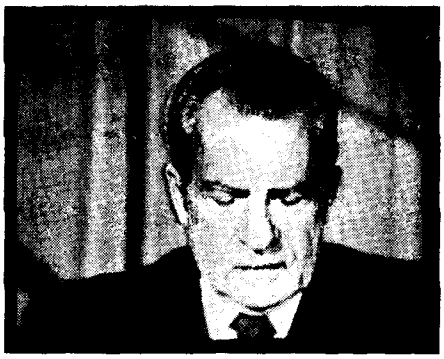

through those lugubrious little sermonettes you hand out every night for years without saying anything to you.)

To get back to the subject at hand, why is it that you call Watergate an "agony"? I don't feel that I'm a sadist, yet I must confess to a kind of enjoyment of the last few months. Moreover, I've seen an unwonted alacrity in the faces of many of my fellow citizens. As news has gone over the past few years, it has been good news. By this I don't necessarily mean to align myself with that somewhat smarmy view of Watergate which holds that it is an enlightening spectacle, democracy renovating itself before the wondering eyes of its citizens, the long arm of the Founding Fathers reaching down through history (I believe the *New Yorker* actually used this benighted metaphor) to save us from our present crisis.

No, I don't believe all that, although it was an effective fighting stance. (Nixon was a foreign substance; in expelling him, the body politic showed that its immunity system is intact and that it hasn't yet lost the instinct for survival.) But I do believe that Watergate *is* the nation's business, the best business it could have—a period of cold introspection after two centuries in hot and homocidal pursuit of the American dream. The country's business *is not,* as you imply, more of the same, a return to the *status quo ante.* This is why we must now feel that the whole affair has been prematurely ended: intercourse without orgasm, Dostoevskian inquiry choked off before the final exploration of darkness, a joke without a punch line, a morality play ended before the moral was clear. Take your choice.

I would have been content to have Nixon play out his string over, say, the next six months, gradually going down like some dark-jowled Ahab entwined in that beast he had pursued so long and so maniacally, shrieking about the majesty of the Presidency even while drowning in it. It is not just because such an end would have been esthetically satisfying, either, but because of my impression that the Presidency is the most dangerous office in the world and needs badly to be humbled far more than it has been. I know we probably differ most deeply on this question, Eric, yet I feel the truth of my position has been proved time and again, ever since one of your heroes, Harry Truman (whose plain speaking you constantly confuse with profundity and whose ghost, God forbid, you tonight predicted would enter the hollow body of Gerald Ford), unleashed the dogs of war, Cold War, in 1945.

The Presidency, this leviathan of boundless appetite, is something for which you guys have an ill-concealed (and, if I may say so, unseemly) reverence. For decades you revel in the notion of the President as omnipotent social engineer. Yet once he stops working from your blueprints, you begin to moan about the "imperial Presidency." Now that you've gotten rid of Nixon (whom you perversely continue to regard as an anomaly rather than a logical fulfillment), you return to your fantasies about the White House being a sort of glass slipper able to transform even the wartiest creature into a thing of beauty if he can just cram himself into it. The experience of the past 15 years, at least, shows just the opposite: the office greatly enhances a man's appetite (not to speak of his capacity) for evil.

All I can say is that it is a good thing you weren't around when George Washington was asked how he would like to be addressed and caused a minor storm by replying that "Your Highness" seemed an appropriate term. I can *hear* your sonorous commentary that night over the Colonial Broadcasting System: "Calm along the blue Potomac was momentarily shattered today when His Highness George Washington told a small audience that he would like to be addressed in a manner befitting his high office and the awesome responsibility it enfolds. Immediately the hotspurs of this capital city carried rumors of an intended usurpation of power. Thus it has ever been. What all the nay-sayers and small time Savonarolas forget is that the United States is now on center stage of the world drama and must not let petty controversy keep it from the business at hand."

(That doesn't quite do you. It sounds more like Ted Baxter, I guess. Sorry, I get you guys mixed up.)

* * *

Eric Sevareid: "I'm always overwhelmed with this business of this simple, brief transfer of

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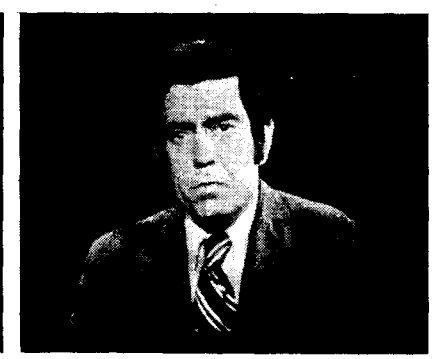

power in this extraordinarily powerful, influential country. All done so simply; that's tradition and that's what the Constitution is all about. . . . I find it very moving."

Actually, what do you expect? What are the alternatives? For some general in khakis and dark glasses and with a chestful of braid to suddenly interrupt the CBS afternoon soap operas with the guttural announcement that there has just been a change of authority in Washington? A coup would be a redundancy and bad for business. Anyway, who could do more for the Pentagon than Richard Nixon, unless it was Gerald Ford? As Ferdinand Lundberg says, there's one political party in the country, the Property Party. They have all the candidates, and recent history shows that they take care of the military better than the military could. You are right though in one respect. Power in America, if I might strive for one of your phrases, is a sort of self-propelling locomotive; as long as he's not careless or a confirmed schizophrenic (Nixon was both), it doesn't much matter who's the engineer waving at the folks along the tracks.

* * *

Walter Cronkite: "After a period of time in which there's been so much suspicion and even proof of influence in high places, this certainly is a fresh start."

I appreciate the fact that you came back from vacation, Walter, just to be present on this occasion. Not because you have any Maileresque delusions that a historical happening wouldn't be the same without you, but from a genuine love of news. I much admire you. (John Chancellor has a pleasant manner but you are News in the way that Cupid was Love.) I worried last year that they weren't telling us the truth when you had your throat operation. Now I worry about the time a few years hence when you retire. The line of succession is established, I know—Roger and then Dan—but so far neither of them can convince me at least that "that's the way it is."

You are the sort who would give any man an even break. Yet that's not necessarily a virtue in journalism, and I certainly have to disagree with you about Ford's freshness. Right after the resignation speech Thursday night, when the CBS mobile unit showed him coming out of his Alexandria home to make his announcement, he looked about as fresh as someone who had just been hit in the center of the forehead with a wooden mallet. I'll admit that I had a sinking feeling. Grasping at straws, I thought, "Well, at least he might be able to settle the football strike." Then, as your correspondent followed him back into the house and mentioned that he was a regular guy who fixed his own pancakes for breakfast, it occurred to me that this was an improvement over cottage cheese with catsup. But it was cold solace.

The nation's first Vice-President, John Adams, once said of his office, "Today I am nothing; but I may be everything." Too true. Now Ford, a nothing all his life, is everything. He is one of those men who gets elected to the House, and far from being bothered by the fact that it is reputed to be one of the more mediocre parliamentary bodies in the Western world, settles down into his seat for the duration. The Fords, and they are legion, love the clubby atmosphere there; they love negotiating the interfacing between the seniority and committee systems and the fact that things work with no unseemly haste in the Rayburn Building, which leaves much time for someone to broker his way to the top of the party apparatus after being elected a dozen or so times (Ford's magic number was 13).

When Ford got all that applause from Congress it was not just because he was the first member of the House to rise directly to the Vice-Presidency, let alone the Presidency, since John Nance Garner. It was even more because he was living proof—something right out of Ripley—that lightning *can* strike twice, and the mediocrity they all live with, if pursued doggedly enough, can lead to success.

* * *

Walter Cronkite: "His speech is sometimes marked with non sequitur and sometimes even grammatical errors . . . but I think we should declare a honeymoon right now on that. Ford speaks from the heart and does make these little

Photos by Daniel Hunter

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vocal gaffes, but the idea is the important thing."

The nation doesn't have any alternative but to give him a chance. You mean something more than that. A honeymoon is just what we *don't* need. None of this talk about making the best of a bad thing. This broadcast is starting to sound like an Elks Club testimonial. Who ever said that the news was supposed to make people happy?

Ford is no tabula rasa. This is a politician who has been sitting in the back rooms dealing cards for a quarter of a century. There is no reason, furthermore, to confuse that trout-faced, uncomprehending look of his with candor or generosity.

Far from being an unknown quantity whom the Presidency might ennoble, Ford is one of those people we know all too well. He brings a set of prejudices which any other country would recognize as an identifiable ideology. The voting record limns out the fuzzy lines of the personality: against the 18-year-old vote; against legislation creating the Office of Economic Opportunity and Medicare; against Food Stamps, Low Income Housing, Federal Aid to Education. One of the rare moments in which he opposed the Nixon administration was in the proposal to divert some of the highway trust funds to mass transit. He tried to gut every major civil rights bill that came along in the last 15 years, including the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act. Nor was it entirely out of some sense of his conscience as a conservative. For opposition to civil rights was apparently the bargain he struck to get himself elected minority leader. He even had some hopes that it would convince Southern Democrats to cross over and vote for him as Speaker. Ford is a man who, according to a recent AFL-CIO study, voted wrong on 92% of the crucial labor votes in Congress. Only two of his colleagues managed to do worse. Actually you probably know more about his record than I do. Why assume it doesn't count?

In 1959 he was voted one of the 25 football players who "have contributed most to their fellow citizens in the last quarter century," yet his quarter century in the Congress was not marked by a major or even a significant piece of legislation in his name. He is the sort of guy we know all too well, Walter. A hard-liner on Vietnam, as late as the fall of 1969 he came out with this gem: "There must not be any capitulation or bug-out in our conflict with Vietnam." He had been one of the biggest fans the Pentagon had in Congress. (Did you notice that dismayed look that washed over poor old Carl Albert's face during the "inaugural" when Ford, who had been droning on about all the belt-tightening, budget-slashing, and reduction of services that would be necessary to beat inflation, turned and noted that all this notwithstanding, neither of *them* would ever sacrifice preparedness on the altar of fiscal reform.)

The only time I can remember Ford making news on his own—outside of the fact that he was a member of the Warren Commission and one of the most outspoken advocates among that august body of the lone-crazed-assassin theory of history—is when he stepped up to the microphones in 1970 and said that William O. Douglas was a disgrace to the Supreme Court and must be impeached. His offense? There was something about illicit connections with the Parvin Foundation, but Ford seemed more upset by the fact that Douglas's publisher, Random House, had sold an excerpt from *Points of Rebellion* to *Evergreen Review*, where it had appeared—interspersed among what the minority leader had been pleased to call "hard-core pornography." This attack came directly on the heels of the rejection of the Harold Carswell nomination by the Senate. In short, Ford is far from an unknown quantity. There are names we give to politicians like these, and probably the most charitable of them is party hack.

I am taking too long here, I know, but just let me finish up by coming back to something Eric said a few minutes ago. He suggested that there was a world of difference between Nixon and Ford, and I want to propose that, on the contrary, they are very much alike.

They met in 1948, you know, when they were both junior Congressmen. Nixon had red-baited Jerry Voorhis out of his seat. Ford's was an even more interesting case. He had come

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under the tutelage of Michigan Senator Arthur Vandenberg, who a few years earlier had teamed up with Nelson Rockefeller and a few other hard-liners to sock it to the Communists at the founding convention of the U.N. in San Francisco, in what observers would later agree was one of the crucial acts leading to the Cold War. Vandenberg was one of the godfathers of bipartisan foreign policy which insured that Truman's Cold War efforts would take place without much in the way of loyal (or any other) opposition. It is no accident that the incumbent Congressman that Vandenberg helped Ford defeat was a *Republican* named Bartel Jonkman, whose chief vice was an isolationism that didn't sort well with the global aspirations of the post-war U.S. Thus Ford arrived in Congress an aggressive "internationalist," the other side of the coin of Nixon's domestic red-baiting.

They were both members of the Chowder and Marching Band who did not eat chowder or march, but banded together every so often to talk things over. In 1960, it was said that Ford was high on Nixon's list of potential vice presidential candidates. In 1963, for those among us inclined to the paranoid view of history, their trails crossed in the assassination–Nixon being in Dallas before Kennedy and Ford one of those in charge of tying up loose ends.

What I'm getting at is that they are not unalike at all. In fact I suspect that their personalities are as fully connected as their politics. Nixon the brooding, relentless, self-destructive tendency that Ford had repressed–smirking, rootless, the mind so disconnected from muscle that it amounted to a visceral schizophrenia and made his body language as obscene as his daily speech. (How could you miss it, Eric, when Nixon boarded the jet on Friday to go back to San Clemente and turned for one last wave to the faithful? His arm shot up suddenly in a gesture of farewell so violent that it almost catapulted him right off the boarding ramp.)

Ford would never do this, having tamed his body early in life for use as a weapon. If Nixon was always headed toward big success or big failure, Ford seemed content with life in the club. He was the type psychologists feel is most likely to survive in America: an IQ of about 110, a low introspection level, an athletic body type, able to devote himself to the pursuit of *reachable* goals, strong religious and authoritarian instincts. Fit, in other words, to be a bank guard or a President. (Everyone has heard LBJ's crack about his playing too much football without his helmet, but Ford's real life provides almost as good an insight: during his college days one of the jobs he took was in a national park, standing for eight hours a day holding a gun pointed at the bears while tourists petted them!)

Nothing of the demonic in this man. In fact he has the look of one of those guys who sits in his hotel room looking through the latest newsletter of the Gideon society when all the other boys are out making their Faustian compact with the world, the flesh and the devil; the sort who, in a moment of personal crisis, closes his eyes and allows his hands to hover above the Bible as if it were a ouija board, then suddenly swoops down to open it and plunge a finger onto a verse out of which he squeezes his daily horoscope.

All the differences notwithstanding though, Eric, I get the feeling that there is a profound symbiosis between the two men. They are yin and yang, compatible opposites flowing in and out of each other, different but the same.

* * *

Walter Cronkite: "President Ford says that the press will have greater access in his administration and that he intends to make himself available. . . ."

I guess Nixon must regret the mistake he made with the press now. He should have gone easier, but he got carried away and started taking bites that were too big–an understandable thing for one whose sainted mother was on a tight food budget. The prerogatives of the media were a witches' brew he never should have stirred. Still, all this yearning for cooperation with the President convinces me that if there was some charisma merchant in the White House, someone who knew how to blandish reporters, show his "human side" at strategic moments, and hold friendly press conferences, then we'd all put up with a great deal more than we were willing to accept from Nixon. After he died we'd all scurry about collecting his wit and wisdom and then prove our loyalty ever after by standing guard at the eternal flame of his myth.

Journalism is at one of its peaks now. Soon we will see Robert Redford immortalize the investigative reporter on the golden screen. That helps convince me that we're at the end of something, rather than at the beginning. Watergate is more or less over now, and so too is that brand of journalism that began around the middle of the war and culminated in what that unliveried lackey Ronald Ziegler immortalized as a "third-rate burglary." What do Bernstein and Woodward do now, look into the circumstances of Gerald Ford's adoption? Into the First Lady's first marriage?

I mean this seriously. Let's say that Eric's hope is realized and the country "gets back on course." (I hate these nautical terms about wakes, courses, helms, ships of state, and all that. I know it's supposed to bring to mind a Yankee Clipper skidding cleanly through the whitecaps as it patrols the Atlantic, but to me it only calls up some British dreadnought plodding along a foreign coast and occasionally pausing to define its mission by lobbing a few shells into the silent green jungle.) Presumably with the new skipper on deck, Vietnam a thing of the past, the milk deals more clandestine, and the miscreants having been jailed or fled town, we can begin the long search for the American status quo. Does that mean the press goes back to the role it played in the Fifties and early Sixties–partner in the national enterprise and purveyor of official lies? Who knows?

I know though that time is running out. (One doesn't often get the opportunity.) Let me close my comments, Walter, by recalling a man-in-the-street interview a correspondent with one of our local affiliates conducted three days ago. One fellow replied to his question about the resignation by saying that *he* would always regard August 9 as a Day of Deliverance. I'd agree, but this certainly raises a question we haven't answered here: delivered from what and unto whom?

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Communes:

The Way We Lived Then

Living Together: A Year in the Life of a City Commune, by Michael Weiss, McGraw-Hill, $6.95.

Hell is other people—the ones living in your commune. So infernal are communal relationships that their inevitable failure now seems to be the constant theme of the confessional literature of the late counter-culture. If it's not one thing, it's another. Love and sex, life styles and dietary habits, political consciousness and interior decoration taste: all create the conflicts that drive communards from the blessed state of collectivity, back to the isolated existences from whence they came.

And then—incredibly—the failure is forgotten and a new communal match is arranged. The phenomenon of the "new communes" is less than ten years old, but for many participants the recidivism rate is high. Some make the rounds of communal houses on a regular yearly basis; each new settlement entails the same solemn pledges of fidelity and commitment, the same high hopes, the same brave dreams. I've been in a few myself, and every time I break away I believe it will be the last time for me in "a house with a lot of people." And yet I'm drawn again to live with others, even if the hopes drop a level and the dreams are less vivid with each succeeding situation.

The very newness of the communal experience as an accepted family form makes it hard to see the dynamics of collective living in a clear historical light. Of course there are connections with the radical subcultures of the Sixties, with the degeneration of human relationships in advanced industrial society, with the specific politics of the decade. But how those forces actually produced the new communes, and how they press on the lives of the members, remain only tentatively answered questions. The few serious surveys* of the commune movement tend to theorize or generalize in the way anthropologists or reporters might recount the family customs of a strange savage tribe. Personal accounts somehow sound the same: "we came together to fuse our atomized lives but found we were not yet ready for the open relationships of collective living; but we learned a lot and grew from the experience."

After living together for a year, Michael Weiss, his wife Ruth, their young son Matt, and six other people realized what almost every intentional communalist finds:

> *. . . In order to build a community—and I want very badly to build a lifelong home—much that we have learned to consider most important has to be looked at from a new perspective. Our culture shapes our values, teaches us what happiness is. The effort to recreate ourselves in our own images is painfully vast, and it takes an unceasing commitment. . . . I felt the house was failing to some extent. If people shifted and moved and went on their solitary ways every year there was no future in a commune like ours.*

The Weisses et al. lived in their suburban Philadelphia communal house in 1971 and 1972, in the late afternoon of the heyday of the new intentional commune movement. The Cliveden

by Andrew Kopkind

* *Commitment and Community*, by Rosabeth Moss Kanter. Harvard. 303 pp.; *The New Communes*, by Ron E. Roberts. Spectrum Books. 144 pp.

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Street communards were more or less "political" in the New Left vein. There were the predictable anti-war posters on the walls, sexual liberation ideas swirled around the communal heads, people wanted to do "organizing" work with their skills and available credentials, and one woman was even subpoenaed in connection with the Camden, N.J., draft board sacking. They tripped, smoked dope and engaged in deep encounters about their own psyches and their relationships.

In a year or so, the intensity of interpersonal struggle and self-criticism consumed itself—for Weiss's group as well as many other communes of the period. The second, third and fourth generation communes seem generally less determined to rake the members' emotions over the therapeutic coals. That does not mean that the living-together phenomenon is burnt out as well. There are no real statistics, but those who keep in touch with communes as an institution (such as the New Community Projects office in Boston) figure that more people are house-sharing today than at the turn of the decade, but fewer perhaps are self-consciously in a "commune."

That is what makes Weiss's chronicle of a passing era an important document, even if it is flawed by a certain ego-involvement in the "success" of the commune, and an overconcern with the quirks of the commune members. In some ways, Weiss sounds like a man writing about his marriage: always focusing protectively on the administration of the relationship as an institution that needs an executive. A woman writing of the same marriage would more likely be concerned with questions of integrity and identity—or just coping—rather than success according to external definitions. No doubt each of the Cliveden communards would write a different book about their year together; Michael's must then be taken as only one of nine ways to look at it.

He has obviously been sensitized at some epidermal level to the issues raised by the women's and gay movements, both of which touched his commune. But although he can write about these issues and examine his own performance in their light, he cannot (or could not, when he wrote his book) see, or feel, the reality of his own often oppressive presence in the group. Personally (although we've never met) I think I would not last a month in his commune. He is competitive and, it seems, homoerotically repressed with the other men, patronizing of and mystified by the women, and either hostile to or uncomprehending of the one gay man in the house. And while at times he generously admits to all of those postures, there is little evidence at all that the admission did him any good. He writes, and thinks, well enough to avoid heavy changes.

It is a truism raised in every communal conversation that group living and sharing is both more complicated and more rewarding than traditional nuclear family forms. At some point (*chez* Weiss it was after a year for some, after two years for others) the complications generally overtake the rewards. What happens, almost invariably, is that the most socially active communards find ways to destroy the group they needed so badly. The kinds of people attracted to communal living are preconditioned by a sense of social alienation and predisposed to experimentation in human relationships: else, they would be living with their lawful spouse and 2.4 kids in a tract house with aluminum siding. But the group arrangement can never, by itself, resolve the alienation and still the urge to experiment. There needs to be a revolution of institutions as well as one of personal consciousness for that, and it has been proved by now that you can't have a revolution within one commune—or one head.

Weiss had been a conventional newspaper reporter who couldn't stomach the values which such a career requires (something about covering Agnew "objectively"). Another man in his commune had dropped out of medical school a few months before graduation because of the corruption of the whole system of health and medicine. Others were disgruntled social scientists. One man had been culturally alienated since childhood by his homosexuality (Weiss keeps wondering why the gay man couldn't get it together, make decisions, be gregarious with the straight men, etc.). Most of the women (in Weiss's telling of it) came along as appendages to the men, although their class and educational backgrounds and cultural availability allowed them to assimilate the self-assertive values of feminism at the first opportunity.

For their brief time all together, the commune satisfied their essential needs for a home and a family. But then the histories of the worlds around them and within them shifted, and it was time to move on: to California (the unending East Coast/West Coast steady-state transfer), or back to professional schools, or to living alone or in couples. Outside, support for dropout styles and revolutionary expectations had waned. Inside, it was time to play the melodies of everyday existence in more muted tones and a lower key. Weiss finally learned "how necessary it was to let the people in the house be evasive at times, to let them hold back. We all needed space in which to be ourselves, realms in which we were unanswerable."

The first years in a commune, like the first years in a marriage or a couple, are devoted to trial and testing. As often as not, the larger or smaller group does not really survive those trials and tests. It's hard to break up a commune, but harder still to dissolve a legal marriage. In both cases, however, the emotional bonds are strong and resistant, and they are snapped only with considerable pain. When I left the first commune I was in—after a year—I spent sleepless nights, dwelled for long hours on the drama of it all, and felt as lonely and hurt as anyone at the end of a traditional marriage. It set me to wondering about the way those old values—"the way our culture teaches us what happiness is"—are transmuted from conventional institutions to radical ones. And we have no solutions, either, for the old problems.

* * *

What never really comes clear in any of these books about communes and group living is the possibility of new family styles that would be sustaining and durable—without the underpinnings of the destructive values of monogamy and exclusivity, the guilt and suspicion about shared income, the gnawing erosive questions about long-range security. It may not be true that the stereotypical nuclear family is detonating before our very eyes: latest research suggests that all is not so chaotic in the marriage

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game, and that marriage-after-divorce is taking up a lot of the singles slack. But it is difficult to deny the subjective impression of almost everyone that the traditional form is no longer an enlivening and enriching one. Those who are still living in the styles of their parents are obviously enjoying it less.

The question is: are those living in innovative relationships enjoying it more? There certainly was a lot of *kvetching* on Cliveden Street, and the experience of the intentional commune movement of the 1968-1973 period indicates that high-struggle living is not for everyone—nor is it for anyone for very long. The communes I know that have remained intact since those earlier days, or have formed in recent years, stay together by concentrating on some special kinds of work and by lowering the voltage of the interpersonal change.

This summer I returned to the corner of Southern Vermont where I had spent a wrenching communal year (at about the time Weiss was getting into his house). Vermont in those years was sprouting country communes like witch grass in July, but the growing season proved short and now there remains only one of the several that had been flourishing in the early Seventies. And even there, many of the members are newcomers; the early founders have moved on in place and space—to the West Coast, to living in couples or alone, to urban professions, to one or another opt-in or freak-out.

There is, however, an impression of stability about that commune, as there is about the counter-cultural population of the area, which has grown considerably even if the highly visible intentional communes have disappeared. The one that remains involves a well-organized agricultural "economy" of food production, preservation, and preparation—and some sale to the world beyond. Members do the usual crafts, and some unusual (and profitable) writing. There is practically none of the "struggling" about relationships that Weiss describes, and which this Vermont commune successfully avoided after the first year.

But although the new age has not dawned in Vermont as we were once promised, it is true that a great many people—not all of them very young—are living in styles quite different than their native neighbors. And the friction between the two populations is amazingly small. Across the border in Massachusetts, however, where urbanization is creeping into areas settled by communalists just a few years ago (near the collegiate core cities of Amherst and Northampton) the new living groups find themselves increasingly under pressure. Montague, Mass., for instance, is trying to enforce a zoning ordinance which makes it illegal for more than five unrelated people to live in a "single family" house. The Supreme Court upheld an identical regulation for a Long Island town last spring.

In fact, the political attacks on communal living are in some ways stronger than ever, and they are felt most keenly in urban situations. City communes, such as Weiss's in Philadelphia, are by their very proximity to old-style homes more threatening to the nuclear neighbors. Some suburbs of Boston, where group-living is almost a norm because of the high concentration of students and young people, are also beginning to enforce the existing rules—or enact new ones—against communal establishments. Some communes I know have to expend a great deal of energy and anxiety over legal problems that never seemed to matter in the past.

The legal and political pressures will not, of course, destroy the ongoing experiments in living together. I suppose it is too late to stop now; more and more people at various stages of their lives will find conventional families unable to give their existence the kind of meaning they want. That is not to say that any of the communal or house-sharing forms now popular will prove a sufficient substitution. In fact, it is almost certain that the communes and collectives that have developed in the past few years are only transitional, that they are not useful as permanent forms of "family life."

Living again with other people—although not in an intentional, self-conscious commune—I can see somewhat more clearly what has to happen to give group living more durability. First of all, the members of the group have to admit the transitional nature of their arrangement, to avoid the fantasies which could never be realized, the expectations that will not now be fulfilled. The dreams came from the rhetoric of the political and counter-cultural revolutions as well as from the sifted memories of middle-class childhood. Both are unhealthy springs on which to found a new life.

Along with that, people living together will learn that it is unproductive to lead their lives as a crusade, to demand that those with them fill all the boundaries of their ideologies and share the nuances of their sensibilities. Diversity in the best old extended families was their strongest point; it simply does not work to demand that everyone in a house be the same color, or of the same sexual orientation, or have the same political line, or view the world in the same ways—or be the same age. Sooner or later, the communards now in their twenties will be in their seventies, and if anything, living together will make more sense then.

Beyond those internal notions, living groups will survive more hardily if they find a way to integrate their work and their home life. The arrangements that most urban groups have now do not allow for such integration: someone drives a cab, another works in a day care center, another is a part-time student, someone else just hangs out and gets stoned. One commune near Boston, however, is pushing towards a work collective, in which all the members—most of whom have training and experience in psychological therapies—can share according to their interests and talents. It is also a commune of people of different ages (from adults 20 to almost 50), of couples and singles, adults and children. It is conscious of itself as a commune, but the members afford each other space enough, as Weiss says, "to be ourselves."

Better forms—the families of the future—will follow the revolutions of the future. The New Left used to say that it was impossible to lay down blueprints for the institutions of a radically transformed America while the transformation was in its beginning stages. The Left was often criticized for such tentativeness and evasiveness, but in the end perhaps it was right to maintain the notion that the new life will have to emerge from the coming struggles.

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Tillie Olsen

Grace Paley

Tales of Two Women

Tell Me a Riddle, by Tillie Olsen, J. B. Lippincott Company, $1.65.
Yonnondio: from the Thirties, by Tillie Olsen, Delacorte Press, $6.95.
Life in the Iron Mills, by Rebecca Harding Davis, with a biographical interpretation by Tillie Olsen, The Feminist Press, $1.95.
The Little Disturbances of Man, by Grace Paley, Viking Press, $4.50.
Enormous Changes at the Last Minute, by Grace Paley, Farrar, Straus, & Giroux, $6.95.

Tillie Olsen was a gift from a friend: years ago someone gave me her copy of *Tell Me a Riddle*, because she liked the stories and wanted to share the discovery. From the first I found Tillie Olsen's work moving and sad; at a time when I needed to believe in the strength of women and in my own ability to survive, these four short stories served as a comfort and a guide. At the time, I could learn very little about the author: she was an older woman, a mother, who lived and worked in the San Francisco area. The four stories had been written over a period of years, and the title story won the O. Henry Award for the Year's Best Story in 1961. It was her first book, a collection of all her fiction.

Four short stories in a lifetime of trying to write while she raised four daughters; finally, some recognition of her talent and ability. Sometimes I had fantasies of bringing her home, giving her a room of her own so she could write. Obviously, I wasn't the only one to have such fantasies: now she has become a teacher of writing. From 1962 to 1964, Tillie Olsen was a Fellow of the Radcliffe Institute; she has taught at Amherst and Stanford and received Ford Foundation and National Endowment for the Arts awards. Presently she is Writer in Residence at M.I.T. So the universities have rescued her from everyday struggle where "the simplest circumstances for creation did not exist."

In one of the stories ("Oh Yes"), a child cries, "Mother, I want to forget about it all and not care. Why can't I forget? Oh, why is it like this and why do I have to care?" And that is what all the stories are about, about people caring, loving, even when they aren't sure why, and suffering because they love.

People don't have much fun in the world of Tillie Olsen: laughter is closer to tears; love is slightly dangerous and painful; a sense of duty and obligation catches everyone in the same suffocating net. The object of life is to survive, to somehow raise your children, to protect the more tender parts of your soul, and to seek small moments of happiness. To have the time to rest, to read, to learn, to discover beauty, is a luxury for her characters, a luxury few of them will ever know and fewer still miss. Love is expressed indirectly, in small services offered and tasks mutely done.

In "I Stand Here Ironing," a mother tries to express her love for her daughter, a "beautiful baby."

She blew shining bubbles of sound. . . . She was a child seldom smiled at . . . a child of anxious, not proud love. We were poor, and could not afford for her a slow and easy growth . . . so all that is in her will not bloom–but in how many does it?

There is still enough left to live by.

Millions of mothers bent over ironing boards must try to comfort themselves with the thought that they did the very best they could, gave all they had to spare, tried to raise children who would pass beyond the ironing board to a gentler, more open world. All the working mothers, during all the years of Depression, poverty and wars, had to cram enough loving for the day into a few minutes, an hour before working at a job and working at home. They must all hope "there is still enough to live by." How little we settle for.

The title story ("Tell Me a Riddle") is an unusual and haunting love story. Again, the love is more felt than offered, as an old man and woman reach their "golden years" and struggle to make some sense out of their long marriage. She is resentful, feeling her life was stolen in all the years of working and caring. He wants to move to a retirement home, where he could continue to have an active, organized social life. On this she is adamant–"No more moving to another's rhythms." She wants to be alone; he needs people.

It is a struggle to the death–her prolonged and painful death, from cancer. But this is not just a sad-but-true story; the struggle is horrible and damaging, yet a sense of loving shines through every word. It is beautiful writing, spare, clean, without anyone making an unnecessary move or saying a meaningless word. The old woman dies, and it is horrible, but she leaves a

by Sharon Curtin

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legacy of love and meaning for her husband and her granddaughter, Jeannie, who cares for her in those last days. You may want to weep at the empty years, but the nobility of the woman, her strength and compassion, will command your respect. It is self-indulgent, I think, to read a story like this and feel only a passing, shallow sadness. It is a real story, about real people and how they live, and the message is to look at people, listen to them, mark their lives as if they were your own.

In 1972, The Feminist Press reissued *Life in the Iron Mills* by Rebecca Harding Davis, first published in 1861. Tillie Olsen wrote the "biographical interpretation" for the book, and her debt to the "pioneer realism" of Davis is acknowledged. She first read *Life in the Iron Mills* when she was 15, living in Omaha, Nebraska. It made a lasting impression, saying that "literature can be made out of the lives of despised people" and "you, too, must write."

Life in the Iron Mills was written in secret and in isolation by 30-year-old Rebecca Harding; it was one of the first stories to record the life endured by the American working class. The town was Wheeling, in the border state of what was then Virginia, one of the first mill towns in the United States. The story is simply about wasted lives and unusual talent burning away in the heat of the blast furnace.

Imagine the 15-year-old Tillie, reading this story over and over, seeing in it not the despair of people but their strength and ability. The "common people" were fit subjects for her pen; the people she saw around her every day could provide the material for a lifetime of exploration. *Life in the Iron Mills* became an inspiration and affirmation; when Tillie Olsen discovered that the author shared her sex as well, she wasn't surprised, only pleased that it was so.

A novel by Tillie Olsen was published this year. *Yonnondio: from the Thirties* was started when she was 19, worked on in the late 1930s and believed lost. The manuscript was found and the work of "that long-ago young writer in an arduous partnership became this older one's as well. But it is all the old manuscript—no rewriting, no new writing." (Biographical note, Tillie Olsen)

I had waited a long time for some new work by Tillie Olsen, carried for years by reading and rereading *Tell Me a Riddle.* She was one of the very few writers with a background similar to my own—working-class, midwestern, largely self-educated. I felt a kinship with her, and wanted to read more of her work. I confess I didn't really expect a 40-year-old manuscript. I wanted a work informed by all those years when she couldn't write, when her talent was neglected, and growing.

Yonnondio doesn't stand on its own merits; it is the kind of work that is occasionally published after an author's death and against her wishes. It is a flawed, incomplete work. It is interesting only because Tillie Olsen is interesting, and because we have waited so long.

Yonnondio is the story of a family moving across the stark landscape of the Depression years, from mining towns, to sharecropping farms, to the ugliness of an industrial city. They have no big dreams or ambitions or skills; they only want some kind of tolerable life. Theirs is a marginal struggle; they barely survive. Sometimes you wonder how, and why they bother.

In the early part of the book, the world is seen through the eyes of a little girl, Mazie. She seems to have some promise, some spark of imagination and wonder that enables her to rise above the dirt and greyness of the mountain mining town. That promise and innocence is gradually destroyed by the maiming circumstances of her life: indifferent teachers, inadequate diet, shameful clothing, and just the grinding away of time. It is not clear exactly when Mazie gives up, but about halfway through the novel, her life really ceases to have any importance, even to her.

It is her mother, Anna Holbrook, who emerges as a woman of depth and strength. Her story comes to dominate the book, and it is the story of all the mothers who struggle against insurmountable difficulties to save just one moment of beauty, one particle of innocence, for their children. Against her is the whole structure of our society, and her children are devoured before her eyes. She cannot stop their destruction, cannot manage even to keep them fed and adequately clothed.

The book is a heavy-handed tale of terrible struggle, yet ends on a curiously hopeful note. The baby, Beth, discovers her power to make a wild, happy noise by banging a lid on the table. For a moment, the family is united in laughter, joining the baby's triumphant crow, and Anna draws hope from that moment, hope that tomorrow will "at least get tolerable."

Yonnondio may become more than just a novel of the Thirties; for most lower-class, working families, the chance of slipping over into a bare subsistence life is a real and present danger. The economy is falling apart, keeping pace with the disintegration of our political structures. Unless things rapidly reverse themselves, the possibility exists for thousands, even millions, of Americans to face the struggle for subsistence, like Tillie Olsen's Holbrooks. Perhaps she chose to publish the book now as a warning against a world that would return to the conditions of the Thirties.

Or maybe it was just time for her to publish something. She is a writer after all, no matter how little of her work is available. It is not a great book, but it makes me just a little bit more aware that the whole damned struggle goes on, again and again, generation after generation, and nobody can win until we all do.

I think of Tillie Olsen and Grace Paley at the same time, because both are women writers whose published work is too little and far between. They have, in different ways, been so busy living their lives, raising children, working at different jobs, and discovering the world, that they haven't had time to write as much as I would like. Other than that they have very little in common.

Tillie Olsen looks directly at the world and finds life full of pain and struggle, "nasty, brutish, and short." The beauty is in facing the truth and in bringing what satisfaction you can out of pure survival. Grace Paley, on the other hand, finds humor and beauty, joy and love, everywhere. Her view is not so direct: more like a fleeting glance that captures an entire

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precious moment.

The Little Disturbances of Man appeared in 1968; *Enormous Changes at the Last Minute* in 1974. Both are collections of short stories, most of which first appeared in other publications.

She is a New Yorker, and has been a typist, a housewife and a writer most of her life. Right now she is also a teacher at Sarah Lawrence College. She is a somewhat combative pacifist and cooperative anarchist. She writes short stories because art is too long and life is too short. All of this is fairly accurate because she wrote it. (Biographical note, Grace Paley)

Grace Paley does her work so well it is difficult to describe. Each story seems perfectly set, with precise and delicate humor and irony, filled with people who seem familiar because they are such carefully drawn characters. In very few words you are drawn by her warmth and joy into the very center of her life, or a moment, or a kind of happening.

Her people seem to talk a lot. They talk about tragedy and loss, about love and old age; always looking forward to the next moment, hoping it will be happy. These are a very special kind of people, the verbal, happy anarchists who inhabit the lower end of Manhattan and a few enclaves on the Upper West Side. One composes a prose essay:

The kids, the kids! The terrible troubles hang on them, such as the absolute end of the known world, quickly by detonation, or slowly through the easygoing destruction of natural resources, they are still, even now, optimistic, humorous, and brave. In fact, they attend enormous changes at the last minute.

That is a world view easy to share; a belief in humanity's ability to change, to overcome impossible barriers with grace and imagination, is about all that keeps me going. Otherwise, like another of her characters, all I can do is "see straight ahead over the thick hot-rod of life to solitary age and lonesome death."

Hope is the underlying message of all of Grace Paley's work, hope permeated with laughter. If she sometimes seems a bit cute, just straying over the edge into a slickness of technique, she is very easy to forgive. We don't have many writers, men or women, whose humor is not malicious or destructive. She is wise and funny and good to read.

More women are writing and publishing fiction than ever before. But so much of this new fiction is basically lacking in imagination or vision. Much of it is simply a reversal of the old missionary position with women coming out on top. Their characters frequently lack warmth or intelligence or any sense of social responsibility; they seem to be as self-indulgent and silly as any women ever created by the super macho male writers popular in the last few decades.

The women in stories by Tillie Olsen and Grace Paley are strong and brave and totally involved in life. Their women are never silly, and they don't whine or dumbly submit. They are fighters. They are our mothers, and our friends, and our sisters in the struggle.

Sharon Curtin is the author of Nobody Ever Died of Old Age *(Little, Brown).*

THE JEWS

(From page 28)

diversity and freedom, and to the struggle of Soviet dissidents—many of whom are Jewish—for a restoration of general civil and political rights. Thus the Jews of Russia are situated in the historic Jewish position of being able to advance the general social interest by the defense of their own—provided their struggle is based on a universalist hope and not on a parochial inwardness and pessimism. But instead of a campaign in behalf of religious, cultural, and political freedom in the Soviet Union, the campaign for Soviet Jewry is a narrow and parochially conceived struggle in behalf of one religious group. It is not a campaign for freedom in the Soviet Union at all. What is being demanded of the Soviet government is not that the Jews should be given freedom as Soviet citizens. What is meant by "Let My People Go" is literally that: let them have exit visas for Israel.

[MARXIST ZIONISM]

All this raises legitimate questions as to the nature of the motives behind this campaign. Is it the needs of Soviet Jews for self-expression that are paramount, or the needs of the state of Israel for Jewish immigrants? (Fifty percent of the total immigration to Israel in 1973 was made up of Soviet Jews.) The narrow nationalist objective of the campaign does more than raise questions, however. It detracts from the internal struggle in the Soviet Union. It creates a divided sense of responsibilities for Jewish dissidents and has had the more general effect of encouraging an exodus of non-Jewish dissidents as well.

This is a fact of special moment in the Soviet situation, since many of the failures of the Bolshevik Revolution are bound up with a phenomenon that might be called Marxist Zionism: the Stalinist program of Socialism in One Country, which made Russia the mecca of the world socialist revolution, and stimulated a profoundly chauvinist turn in its development by confusing the narrowly defined interests of a repressive state with the broad hopes of a movement for human emancipation.

The nationalization of the world socialist revolution was in a sense very similar to the developments that took place in world Judaism. Stalin's slogan of Socialism in One Country, which after Lenin's death became the policy of the Soviet state, was not so much a program of hope as an act of despair. The defeat of the revolutions in Germany and Europe, the Western military intervention, and the Civil War which destroyed the fabric of Russian society, worked a profound change in the revolutionary optimism that had inspired the Bolshevik mission. The diehard exponent of revolutionary optimism and defender of the original ideals and internationalist commitments of the revolution, the Jew Trotsky, was sent into exile and murdered, and the pragmatism of national survival became orthodoxy under the Stalin regime. Out of the defeat of the hopes of world revolution, and a profound international pessimism, the Bolshevik

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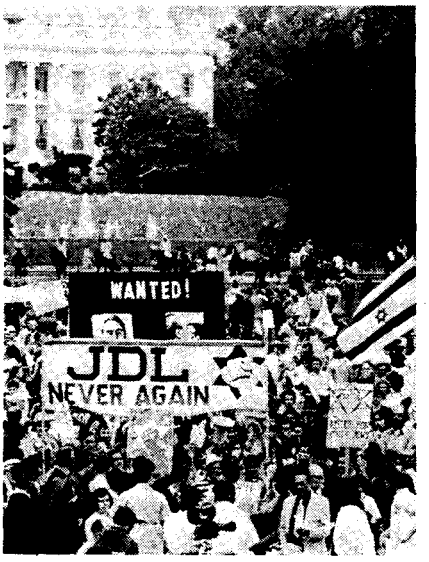
Revolution turned inward and lost its original revolutionary élan.

The dissidents in Russia today, the forerunners perhaps of a revolutionary revival, are not charged by the Soviet government with democratic deviance or a lapse into liberal turpitude. For political and social democracy are goals of the socialist revolution, so deeply embedded in the socialist program that they cannot be formally abandoned by the Soviet state. The dissidents are charged rather with being *anti-Soviet,* unpatriotic, of colluding with the West, in their efforts to express unorthodox and unapproved sentiments and viewpoints. The Zionist-encouraged exodus of Soviet Jews and Soviet dissidents thus plays into the hands of the Soviet oligarchy, which wants to deny the legitimacy of every struggle for internal freedom in the Soviet Union, and convert it into an act of treason against the Soviet state.

In sum, the Zionist campaign is a conservative rather than a radical force in the Soviet context. It tends to increase the historical negativism and conservatism of the Jewish community as well. By insisting on the unqualified anti-Semitic content of the Soviet situation—and by implication the failure of the socialist revolution to emancipate the Jews—it distorts the historical reality and denies the hope which can be based on its achievements.

It is true that the Russian Revolution failed to emancipate the Jews, as it failed to emancipate the other peoples of the Soviet Union. But it is not true that it made no difference at all, or that there were not large gains, for the Soviet people generally, or for the Jews in particular. It is not just that the Jews have been liberated from the Pale of Settlement, and make up one of the more privileged strata of present-day Soviet society, accounting for an even greater percentage of the scientific intelligentsia, for example, than in the United States. But even more indicative for their communal survival is the fact that Russia, the crucible of the most virulent anti-Semitic outrages, the nation that gave the term "pogrom" to the world, saved two and a half million Jews from Hitler's gas chambers, when Stalin shifted virtually the entire Jewish population of European Russia to the Soviet interior to keep them out of the reach of the advancing German armies.

This is one of those "forgotten" facts that can alter a political and moral *gestalt.* For if this is not a historical basis for a more hopeful view of what might be gained by political struggle in behalf of universalist values, then what is? If the efforts of those Jews—Marx, Trotsky, Zinoviev, Kamenev, Radek, Rosa Luxemburg and so many others—who dedicated their lives to the socialist revolution and the ideal of human emancipation did succeed in moving the historical process forward in a way that so profoundly affected Jewish destiny as well, is that not an argument in behalf of such a "utopian" course of action, especially when the alternatives are so bleak? Is that not an indication that it was not the ideal that was wanting, but the effort in behalf of the ideal?



Protest for Soviet Jews, Wash., D.C.

[BIG BROTHER]

Like the Zionist program to secure Israel's survival, the campaign for Soviet Jews also invokes the specific instrumentality of the American state. Here, too, the means can hardly be separated from the ends. No special insight is required to see that the freedom of Jews in Russia is of greater interest to Washington than the freedom of South Koreans, or Brazilians, or South African Blacks. Yet, far from creating suspicions as to the sincerity of the concern, this duplicity is eagerly embraced by the Zionist establishment which is also seeking to legitimize itself in America and resolve the problem of its own "dual nationality," via an anti-Communist patriotism which is as disreputable as it is ultimately self-defeating. (Surely its pathetic symbol is the figure of the White House Rabbi, Nixon's hapless last defender.)

Finally, there is the arrogance involved in so blatant an assertion of self-interest over the general welfare, in forging an alliance with the military and jeopardizing the détente. Apparently the leaders of the campaign for Soviet Jewry feel well enough protected by the coincidence of this aggressively advanced self-interest with America's long-term anti-Communist hysteria to take the risk.

Self-assertion, however, is not an attitude that can be confined to predetermined areas where there is a convergence of patriotic prejudice and Jewish interest. Only recently, for example, a group of rabbis was urging in the media that Jewish couples eschew birth control and *not* limit their families. Although population growth was a serious social problem, the problem of Jewish survival came first. As an appeal, this managed to be both offensive and ludicrous, since raising the percentage of Jews in the population from its present 2.8 percent to 3 or even 5 percent would hardly enhance the prospect of Jewish survival.

Ludicrous or not, a boldly self-centered attitude has become an increasingly prominent trait among the organized Jewish community in America. One hears a lot these days of the first half of Hillel's famous dictum, "If I am not for myself, who will be for me?" but not so much of the second half, "If I am only for myself, what am I?" This self-centeredness is self-consciously regarded by the mainstream Jewish community as a form of militant self-defense. It is an attitude directly linked to the Zionist achievement in Israel, and the source of its propagation among American Jews can frequently be traced to encounters with the *sabras* of the *kibbutzim.* For the constant theme of self-justification heard in Israel is that Jews have allowed themselves to be kicked around too long. Through the centuries, Jews

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have been humanity's Christians—passive victims turning the other cheek. In the name of universal justice, they have been committed to everyone's cause but their own. It is time for them to stand up for themselves and put their own interests first.

What is important in this message is only secondarily the distortion of Jewish history. For one fights realistic battles in the end, and the Jewish tradition is rich in heroes and martyrs who fought on the impossible terms presented to them; the mere fact that through all the persecutions the Jews were not broken, as a people, attests to this fact. Moreover, if Israel could not survive a season without American military and economic support, as the Israelis are constantly reminding American Jews, what is the meaning of their "standing up for themselves" and what pride can they possibly have in paying the price of complicity in America's oppressive global policies and crimes? What is important in this nationalist breast-beating is the distortion of basic values which it entails. For the underlying assumption of the argument for Jewish nationalism is that Jews can expect no justice or aid from others, that the struggle for universal values is quixotic, and they must and can go it alone, on the basis of pragmatic and narrowly self-interested arrangements.

["WHAT'S GOOD FOR THE JEWS?"]

The Israeli posture is defined by the present conditions of Israeli existence. But who is kicking the Jews in America around, that they should be so pessimistic about potential friends and so intent on marshalling the clan for battle? It is not an oppressive ruling class, that calls forth "Jewish power," but America's Blacks and other subject minorities who are pressing against the fringes of Jewish middle-class privilege. The basic conservatism of this Jewish militance, so strikingly parallel to the Israeli paradigm, and so profoundly linked to its rationale, is illustrated by a bellwether editorial which appeared a few years ago in *Commentary* magazine, the sometime liberal publication of the American Jewish Congress, under the heading "What's Good for the Jews?"

Writing of the end of the "Golden Age of Jewish Security" which took place during the Fifties and early Sixties, when "*everything* was good for the Jews," editor Norman Podhoretz warned, "In the brassier age aborning," Jews would have to adopt a self-interested approach to social action. "Jews will either ask, *Is it good for the Jews?* and act on the answers, or . . . wake up one day to find themselves diminished, degraded, discriminated against and alone." Despite the tone of embattled isolation, *de rigueur* in these formulations, the principle of self-interest advanced by Podhoretz and other liberal-conservative Jewish spokesmen, has less to do with survival than with vested privilege.

For in the context in which the criterion of *What is good for the Jews* is advanced, it is frankly the defense of a *status quo* in which Jews have won positions of privilege and a measure of security, and which is now under challenge by other oppressed minorities. The Podhoretz editorial, for example, is specifically addressed to the problem of justifying Jewish opposition to affirmative action hiring policies which would increase the number of Blacks and other minority groups (but not Jews) in university and civil service positions.

It would be wrong to suggest that this trend has no opposition, even within the central organizations of the Jewish community. The Social Action Commission of Reform Judaism and the National Council of Jewish Women are on record, for example, as friends of the court in opposing the De Funis suit against affirmative admissions quotas. Dr. Nahum Goldman, head of the World Jewish Congress, and other community leaders have expressed concern over the tendencies within the Jewish community to forget "timeless Jewish ideals" as the community becomes economically affluent and socially accepted. But the trend is there, and is even more pronounced among Jews lower down on the social ladder and therefore closer to the challenge of other minority groups.

Wherever it exists, however, it is accompanied by a bad conscience. The bad conscience is so regular an aspect of the trend, moreover, that it invariably draws complaints from advocates of the new Jewish conservatism, like Podhoretz. Jews, they regret, seem to be more uncomfortable than others with the ethic of self-interest. If that is true, perhaps that is because it is such a betrayal of their tradition, and of all the suffering that has made up their history, of the fact that they have been strangers and know the heart of a stranger. Perhaps it is because no Jew is yet able to escape the sense of his or her own vulnerability, and therefore no Jew can fail to know subconsciously, even while the Jewish lobby is bending the foreign policy of the United States to the Jewish interest, that such power is illusory and that the more the Jewish interest is advanced as such, the more a backlash is inevitable. Ultimately, the ethic of tribal loyalty and group self-interest not only is not a pragmatic rule for survival, but a sure path to destruction. A tiny minority like the Jews, with a two-thousand-year history as scapegoats and victims, will not survive without allies in a *bellum omnium contra omnes.* If the pessimism of the Zionists and the conservatives were correct—and ultimately Jews had no friends but Jews—then there would be no hope at all.

The bad conscience of tribalist Jewry is accompanied by an enormous wave of self-pity and self-justifying paranoia. It is as though the intensity of the Jewish fear for Jewish survival in America were directly proportional to an inner sense within its own traditions that a tribal politics is morally indefensible. The bad feelings of those Jews who voted for Nixon are expunged by the thought that because of their votes Israel is safer. The uncharacteristic opposition of large sections of the Jewish middle class to the aspirations of a struggling minority is justified by the conviction that Blacks are anti-Semitic and support the Arab cause. The peril of Israel thus becomes a necessary justifying basis for the conservative shift of America's Jews, much as the creation of Israel and the consequent nationalization of Judaism are organic elements of its cause.

This linkage is dramatized by a recent book on *The New Anti-Semitism,* written by the director and associate director of the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, which argues from the premise that criticism of Israel and Israel's supporters constitutes a threat to Israel's security, a matter of

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deep moment to America's Jews, and concludes that criticism of Israel indicates an insensitivity towards Jews and indifference to their fate. This insensitivity provides the basis of what the authors define as the "new anti-Semitism." It is not exactly that these new anti-Semites don't like Jews, as one disconcerted Jewish reviewer for *The New Leader* put it; "it's that they don't like Jews enough." This same reviewer goes on to comment that "a good deal of what is presented here as anti-Semitism is not anti-Semitism at all" and warns that "unless the Anti-Defamation League is careful, it's going to give anti-Semitism a good name." That so bad a miscalculation could be made by such experienced authorities is an index of the ulterior function of the recent cries of anti-Semitic "persecution" in the shaping of a conservative politics in the Jewish community.

[A BLACK MIRROR]

It is not surprising to find, therefore, that the principal "new anti-Semites" singled out by the authors are American Blacks and the radical left—both new and old. (There are also some representatives of the Protestant clergy who have had the temerity to criticize Israel's politics.) According to the authors, the radical left, whose principal sin seems to be that some of its sects are hostile to both Zionism and Israel, "today represents a danger to world Jewry at least equal to the danger on the right."

For a radical Jew, the greatest pain in this indictment and the situation which it reflects is not caused by the attack on radicals, which is both traditional and expected. For the radical secularizers of the prophetic tradition in Judaism have always been a source of embarrassment to the social assimilators of the Jewish establishment and have always been attacked for it. But the alienation of the Jewish community from the sufferings and struggles of Black people is a less expected and more deeply significant event. Like Israel's oppression of the Palestinian Arabs, it is a poignant sign of the falling away of the Jewish community from Judaic values, and its profound and tragic alienation from its own history and suffering. For in a real sense, Black people are the Jews of America, the obsessional victims of the white majority in much the same way that Jews have been the obsessional victims of the Christian majorities in Europe.

"To gain a proper perspective on their own situation in America, Jews might consider a *Jewish* majority still living in poverty-ridden ghettos, brutalized and frequently murdered by racist police, their children psychologically beaten down in alien schools. For these are the real premises of black discussions of ethnic survival in America."

Although subjected, until the post-war period, to significant forms of ethnic persecution and oppression, Jews in America have in fact been relatively protected from the more savage persecutions they experienced in their European exile. In part this was the result of the absence of an established Christian Church and the exclusivist binding of religion and nationality that existed in European states, and sharply defined the Jews as an alien element. In part, it was because of the buffer of Black suffering and oppression itself, as though one ritual victim was sufficient for the progenitors of racial violence.

Today Jews can look into the mirror of Black America and see the paranoid nature of their own fears. For Black apprehensions about survival are not nurtured amid the comforts of Yonkers and the Berkeley hills. American Blacks, too, have an ancient homeland from which they were uprooted and dispersed, and they can witness, even now, the deaths of 3,000 Blacks a day in West Africa without a ruffling in the wind of world opinion, while in Southern Africa their brothers and sisters are pressed under the heel of a white supremacist regime supported by the entire white democratic world. To gain a proper perspective on their own situation in America, Jews might consider a Jewish majority still living in poverty-ridden ghettos, brutalized and frequently murdered by racist police, their children psychologically beaten down in alien schools, while serious proposals are put to the National Academy of Sciences in behalf of theories of their genetic inferiority. For these are the real premises of Black discussions of ethnic survival in America.

There is indeed an instructive parallel for Jews in these debates about survival that have taken place in the Black community. Some of the proposals (usually the most widely noted) have been of a nationalist strain, often patterned explicitly on the Zionist example. These seek a solution to the oppression of America's Blacks in the possession of a national territory, either in Africa or the United States. But there is also a view, which corresponds to that of the internationalist radicals in the Jewish community, which sees that the very conditions for a nationalist "liberation" do not exist for Black Americans (as they do not really exist for Jews). This is in part because the land question (i.e., the problem of where to settle) is insoluble, and in part because the nation-state is itself an anachronism in an age of modern technology and empire. True self-determination cannot be achieved on a territorial basis. But these practical considerations also combine with a broader vision of ethical responsibilities and goals to give rise to a new self-consciousness: America's Blacks form a unique group, according to some Black radicals, in that the conditions of their self-emancipation are the conditions of emancipation of all groups from national and social oppression.

This is a view that was first expressed to me by Black Panther leader

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Huey Newton, whose slogan of "revolutionary intercommunalism" is an effort to give the concept a name. But while Newton and the Panthers are a Black group insisting on the futility of the nation-state as a solution to the problems of national oppression, they recognize the historical necessity of "raft-states" for threatened peoples, like the Palestinians and the Jews. A recent Panther position paper on the Middle East declares:

> *though . . . the ultimate survival of Jews and Palestinians, as of all peoples, depends on the revolutionary overthrow of world imperialism and capitalism, we call upon Jews and Arabs in the Middle East to recognize the national rights of their opponents: upon the Government of Israel to recognize the claims of the Palestinian people for independent national institutions, as originally provided by the UN, and of the Arab states and the Palestinian liberation movement to recognize the existence of the State of Israel, as the national sovereignty of the Jewish people. This is the moral basis from which a political solution to the immediate crisis in the Middle East can be found.* (Black Panther, *May 25, 1974)*

"Revolutionary intercommunalism" is the Panther catch-phrase for the messianic kingdom dreamed of by Marx and the Jewish prophets. Because its goals are set explicitly beyond the nation-state, Newton and the Panthers have been sharply criticized by nationalist elements in the Black community, just as their counterparts in the Jewish community have been historically charged with assimilationism.

[A NEW IDENTITY]

In a sense the charge is true. The Jewish radicals of Eastern Europe had sought to go beyond the boundaries of the parochial and backward-looking ghetto societies, in which their aspirations were stifled by religious obscurantism and archaic attitudes. They identified with the tradition of Jews who had transcended Jewry, who were of Jewry but not in it—great Jewish heretics like Spinoza, Marx, and later Freud, who traversed the boundaries of many nations and traditions, freed themselves from communal dogmas, and were able to search the future for a new, more rational basis of human community and identity. The Jewish radicals sought out the progressive intellectual and political trends of the 20th century and made the link between the ethical message of the Torah and the great secular struggle for social emancipation. "We knew the Talmud, we had been steeped in Hassidism," wrote Isaac Deutscher;

> *we had the eleventh, and thirteenth and sixteenth centuries of Jewish history living next door to us and under our very roof; and we wanted to escape it and live in the twentieth century. . . . To someone of my background the fashionable longing of the Western Jew for a return to the sixteenth century, a return which is supposed to help him in recovering, or re-discovering his Jewish cultural identity, seems unreal and Kafkaesque.*

There is a deeper sense, however, in which the charge of assimilation hurled at the Jewish internationalists is not true, in which their Jewish identity is not negated by their mission, but brought to a new level of fulfillment. In the essay in which the previous passage appears, addressed to the question of "Who is a Jew?" Deutscher wrote of the "macabre truth" that "the greatest redefiner of Jewish identity" was Hitler:

> *Auschwitz was the terrible cradle of the new Jewish consciousness and of the new Jewish nation. We, who have rejected the religious tradition, now belong to the negative community of those who have, so many times in history, . . . been singled out for persecution and extermination.*

Rejecting the idea that a positive Jewish identity should be resurrected on the basis of race ("Are we now going to accept the idea that it is racial ties or 'bonds of blood' that make up the Jewish community? Would not that be another triumph for Hitler and his degenerate philosophy?"), Deutscher asked what then makes a Jew: "Religion? I am an atheist. Jewish nationalism? I am an internationalist. In neither sense am I, therefore, a Jew. I am, however, a Jew by force of my unconditional solidarity with the persecuted and oppressed."

Out of the negative community of those who have been singled out for persecution and extermination, there arises the community of those whose solidarity with the stranger, with the persecuted and exterminated, is unconditional. "A people," writes Martin Buber, "need not necessarily be the fusion of kindred stems. . . . But the concept 'people' always implies unity of fate." The Jews became a people in the course of their exodus from Egypt, when Moses led them out of slavery and gave them the teaching and the Law. Later, in the Diaspora, "the uniqueness of Judaism became apparent in a very special way. In other nations, the national powers in themselves vouch for the survival of the people. In Judaism, this guarantee is given by another power . . .: the membership in a community of faith."

The revolutionary belongs to a community of faith. It is a community that extends beyond the classes and the nations, and reaches across the boundaries that divide and oppress. Within every national group it forms the basis of a new human community and a new human identity. Today the revolutionary is isolated, obstructed by the divisions that form the cultural and political legacy of the past; the revolutionary is of the nations, but not in them. For the revolutionary's eye is on the future. Today there is Black and Jew, American and Russian, Israeli and Arab. But within each nation—Russia, America, Israel, Egypt—there are the aliens, the persecuted, the unassimilated, the "Jews" who know the heart of the stranger and who struggle for human freedom. Today they are separated; tomorrow they will be joined. Today the light of their faith shines in many national colors, but it is also expressed in the service that commemorates the exodus and looks toward a future turning: *This year we are slaves; next year we shall be free men and women. This year in the lands of our exile; next year in Jerusalem.*

In thinking through these themes, I was aided by the following books—Isaac Deutscher's The Non-Jewish Jew, *Aharon Cohen's* Israel and the Arabs, *Noam Chomsky's forthcoming* Peace in the Middle East?—*and by dialogues with my friend Michael Lerner.*

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BORROWED TIME

(From page 31)

Expressed more formally, what Nixon was saying is identical with the theory of Keynes that, as increasing consumption tends toward equality with increased output, prices tend towards a limitless increase, towards true inflation. Nixon was invoking Keynes's dictum, implying that the industrial production was showing no increase because the whole of the increase in national income now consists of increase in consumption, whence today's inflation. To Keynesians, Mr. Nixon's statement was unimpeachable —a refreshing change.

The second statement, by Dr. Burns, which must be related to Nixon's statement, is that what is known as the Phillips Curve has no validity. The Phillips Curve is an abstraction from English economic history which generalizes that periods of rising prices are characterized by beneficial effects upon employment, industrial activity, and standards of life. Everything rises, including living standards. The reverse effect is experienced in periods of price contraction. Burns denies the truth of this theory—and is correct under today's circumstances. But, insofar as I can gather, Burns has not pressed his reasoning far enough. It is not that the Phillips Curve is invalid, but that it has *ceased* to be valid.

This cessation expresses the cessation of something else: an historical tendency towards excess of supply over demand in advanced societies. Demand today exceeds supply. And despite the poverty of welfare recipients and others, advanced societies lack a numerically significant reserve army of totally incomeless unemployed to depress consumption. Therefore, the conditions do not now exist which characterized the English economy over the extensive span examined by Phillips. Things have changed, and the change is basic and permanent. As the Third World advances industrially—which it will—today's advanced nations will find demand continuously exceeding supply.

In the preceding stage of capitalism, two things could be asserted with certainty. First, moderate price rises tended, by stimulating industrial activity, to produce a general rise in real social income and, even more, to raise employment and income levels of the poorest at a rate faster than the general rise.

In 1947, for example (measured in constant 1969 purchasing power of the dollar), some 24.4 percent of U.S. families had annual incomes under $3,000; in 1969, only 9.3 percent. The proportion of white families in the income bracket below $3,000 was 21.1 percent in 1947 and only 8.1 percent in 1969; for non-white families, the percentage had been 56.7 percent in 1947 and fell to 20.4 percent in 1969. (The median income—that income figure at which as many families had more as had less—was $4,973 in 1947 and $9,433 in 1969.) Inequality? Of course, but the inequality was diminishing, albeit far too slowly for the human conscience to tolerate, or for social forces to contain.

The argument can be advanced that price changes negated much of the gains—and it cannot be refuted, with the consumer price index rising about 64 percent in the period. Nevertheless, reported "real" median family annual income rose 89.7 percent adjusted for price changes; of white families, 88.6 percent; of non-white, 132.7 percent. Whatever flaws there are in the statistics (including the definition of a family) it is manifest that despite the unreliability of historical statistics and revisions in the methodology in their gathering, employment and income changes especially favorable to the poorest *did* occur as a direct consequence of the stimulative effect of moderate price rises (at a compound rate of about 2.3 percent per annum over a 22-year period).

The basic question, then, is why the Phillips theory no longer applies. If it held true in the past, why does it not hold true in the present? The answer lies in interest rates. The net cost of money is so high, over 12 percent per year for the prime rate borrower, that corporations now require a gross rate of return, (including interest charges, depreciation, and debt-retirement needs) of 24-25 percent per annum on borrowed money if an after-tax net return of 6-7 percent is to be earned on new borrowings.

This can be accomplished only by price increases (if it can be accomplished at all). If it is accomplished, it produces a chain-multiplier effect throughout the entire system, at each stage of industrial processing in the corporate chain from materials producer to retailer. And these price increases apply not only to new output produced on newly borrowed capital, but to all output, by non-borrowers as well. *All* capital, borrowed or not, is now required to yield rates of return that would be needed to justify borrowings at today's ascending interest rates. This is because, otherwise, it is more profitable to lend out one's capital and earn interest, rather than spend it to produce.

Under these conditions, the old laws of capitalist economics no longer apply. Price increases now *depress* living standards and employment because the increase is eaten up by interest rates and cannot percolate through the system to the lowest layers. Corporations are therefore inverting (perverting, if you prefer) capitalist economic theory. Instead of maximizing their profits by pricing their goods at the marginal price of demand, they are *raising* their prices as demand *falls.* Their intent (hope) is to earn as much from reduced sales as they used to earn on rising sales. (G.M. is a case in point with its announced second price increase of $500 per car.) The new theory of corporations is "if you can't sell more, charge more." One must assume that, if demand falls still further, prices will be raised still higher. Under these conditions, it is clearly impossible for Phillips's observation to hold true today.

[NEARING THE END]

The fact that the Phillips theory no longer applies is the most critical observation one could make. What it tells us is that we are no longer in a real capitalist economy and that the system has moved away from relative equilibrium to disequilibrium. Corporations are approaching the point at which they must borrow just to continue their operations but cannot afford to borrow at today's cost of capital.

One reason for this is that the astonishingly large reported profits of recent months are largely illusory, phantom numbers. How has this come

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about? Principally by corporations selling their output at prices reflecting current inflated values of inventories bought in earlier periods at much lower prices. The difference between what they paid for materials and supplies and what they charge for them in the selling prices of their products shows up as "profit" on their books. Such profits are fictitious. More important, because inventories now have to be replaced at costs even higher than recent ones, the fictional "profits" represent no increase in usable liquid assets. They cannot be spent because, in large part, they are mere bookkeeping figures. And this is why corporations are borrowing so heavily. They are running out of cash with which to replace inventories and equipment at today's inflated prices.

Moreover, as old corporate debt matures, it must be replenished with new debt, magnified in amount by price increases of capital goods and inventories, and at far higher interest rates than the old debts bore. What this means is that not only are government's capital needs limiting the capacity of the banks to lend, but are also limiting the capacity of industrial corporations to recycle their own debts as they fall due. The effect can be a gross contraction in industrial activity. And the question arises as to where the savings will come from upon which government depends for *its* debt recycling.

The circle narrows and narrows and narrows. It is all perhaps beyond the capacity of political society to contain. This is the state at which the system has arrived. There is no possibility that the people will tolerate the Nixonian plan deliberately to reduce their standard of life while compelling increase in their volume of output. But *if this does not happen, the system* will collapse because of incapacity to create liquidity by social savings.

Liquidity is the essence of capital. Today's illiquid society is no longer capitalism in any recognizable sense of the term. What it really is I cannot yet figure out—nor what it might become. The highest probability—if the people permit it—appears to be that the government, already prime borrower and determinor of interest rates, may also become prime lender, making capital advances from the printing press to corporations (directly or indirectly) at its own discretion and in whatever directions the bureaucracies decide.

Some may think that we have reached a crossroad. I do not. We have reached a terminus. An historically determined process has come to an end. Its death throes are not a pleasing spectacle because there is no guarantee that what is to follow will be better and not worse. This depends upon decisions by a people who have not yet reached a level of understanding sufficient to permit the necessary objective expression of choice.

¡BASTA! (enough!)

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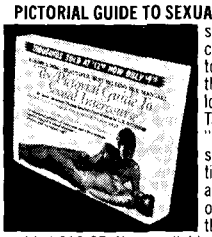

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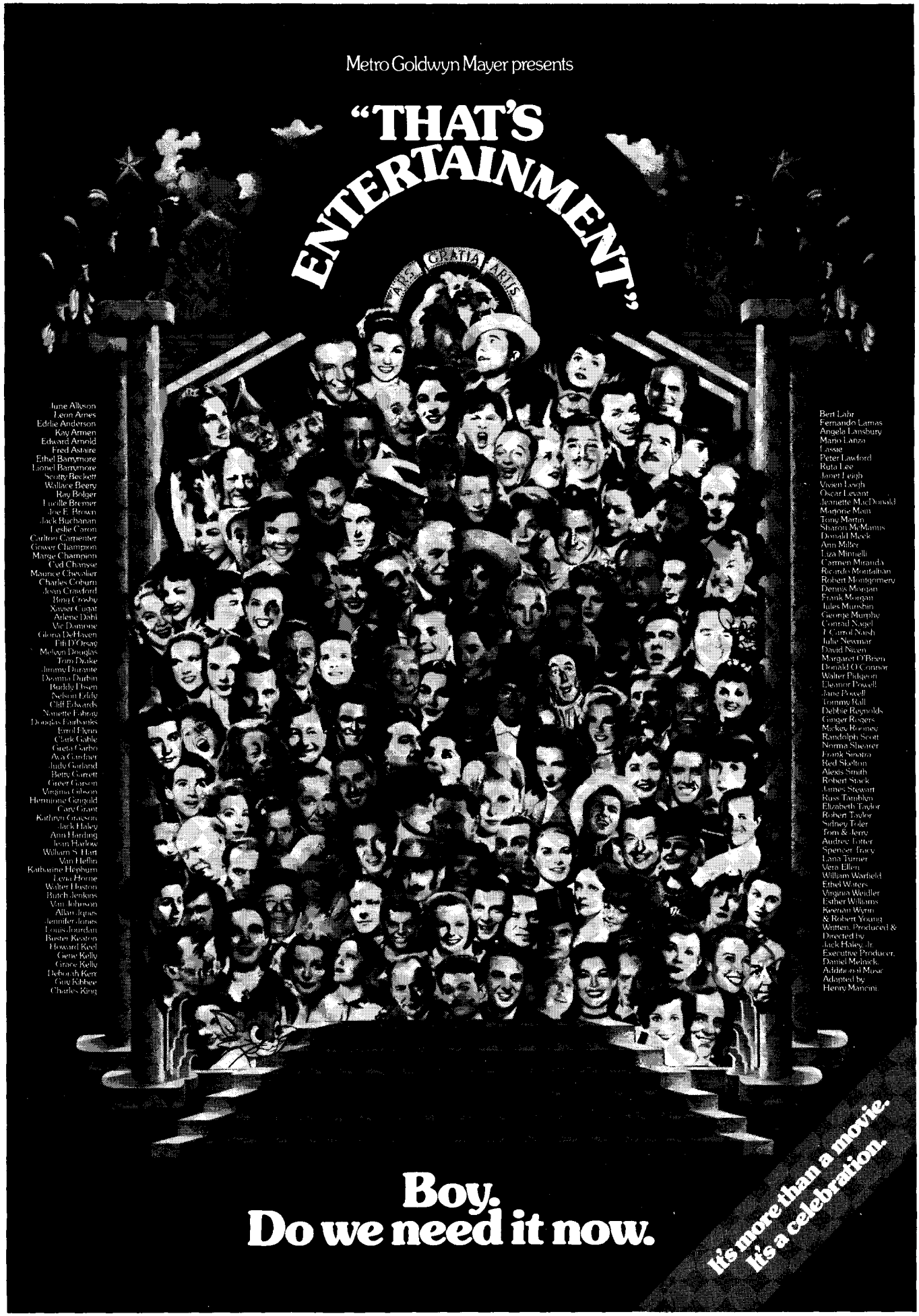

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